November 2014

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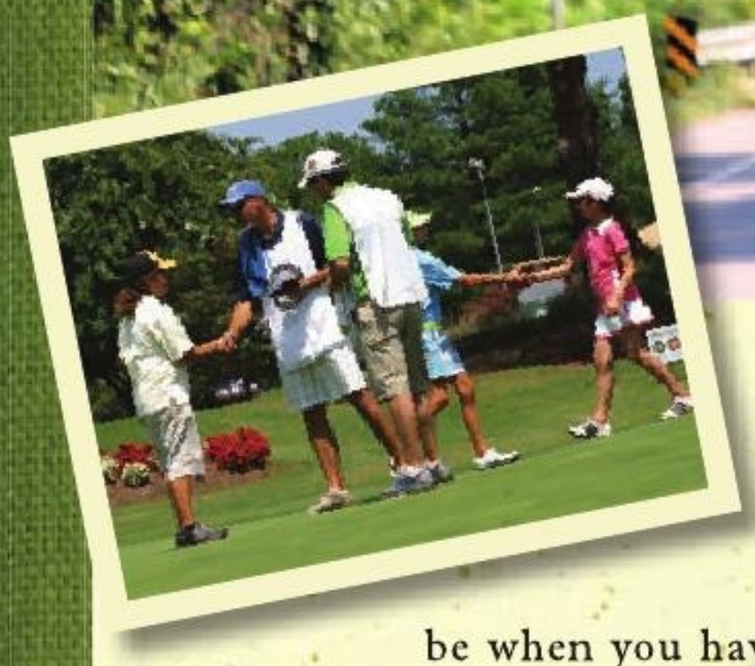

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# November 2014

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Cover Photograph by James Stefiuk

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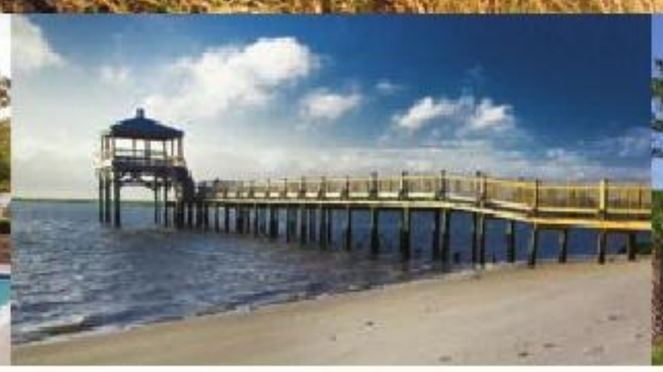

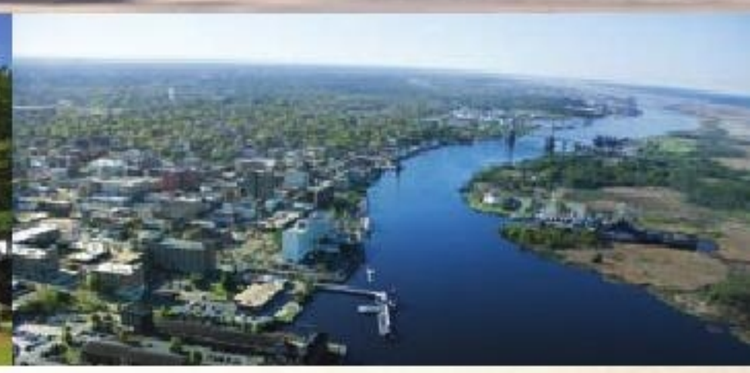

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# Saying Grace

By Jim Dodson

**In our house,** saying grace at Thanksgiving – anytime, really – is something of a cosmic adventure. Like Forrest Gump's box of chocolate, you never quite know what you'll get.

I suppose this is because we're a fairly diverse lot as blended modern families go, a spiritually mixed tribe that includes everything from Catholic elders to Jewish young people, with a liberal sprinkling of Protestants in the middle. My wife grew up Roman Catholic but her college-boy sons, who were reared in a reformed Jewish tradition, now see themselves as broad-minded, multi-faith guardians of a fragile planet, eco-crusaders. My own children, who grew up stout little Episcopalians singing in the Chapel Choir, now seem more inclined toward the meditational power of Buddhism seasoned with a smidge of the enlightened agnosticism from their late Scottish grandmother.

If there is fault to be assigned for this hothouse society of homegrown free-thinkers who gather round our supper table only a few times a year now, typically only at the holidays, it probably falls on the heads of my wife and me, who dutifully instructed our children in the spiritual traditions of their forebears but strongly encouraged them to make up their own minds about matters of the spirit, for life has a way of road-testing endurance and faith in a variety of unexpected ways.

Still, under my roof, I have certain practices and beliefs that aren't fully negotiable and saying grace – offering a simple blessing of thanks over a shared evening meal – is one of them. Maybe it's the force of tradition that perpetuates this ritual of gathering or possibly the simple grace that comes with the wisdom of saying thank you.

Gratitude, goes an old French proverb, is the heart's memory. "The mouth gives voice to what fills the heart," points out Luke's Gospel.

Whatever it is, and regardless of their true feelings about the practice, our diverse band of cosmic travelers is pretty good-humored about humoring the old man's old-fashioned desire to join hands, bow heads, and thank whatever kindly force of the universe allowed us to gather and break bread one more time.

Perhaps they sense, as I certainly do, that in a world that's moving as swiftly and unpredictably as the one around us does, the act of pausing to merely express a timeless form of gratitude to whatever divine and mysterious power shapes and illumines our lives is not only a healthy social exercise but a way of getting in touch with each other's heart.

But there are always nice surprises, like the time my young daughter, Maggie, then about age 4, pointedly asked to say her first grace at Thanksgiving and forcefully came out with: "Dear God, thanks for this nice food Mom made. And, oh, by the way, Christmas is coming up and I'd really like to have that doll house. And please stop Jack from whistling at bedtime. He's so annoying."

As far as this patriarch is concerned, all thanks are welcome. Blessings come in every form, as diverse and surprising as life itself.

My own faith journey, after all, is a pretty mixed affair of the heart. My great-great-grandfather was an itinerant Methodist preacher who founded churches across the state after the Civil War, but I grew up a skinny-legged Lutheran in Greensboro surrounded by two large and robust food-loving Methodist and Southern Baptist clans for whom sharing a homemade meal – and saying grace over it – was central to their exercise of faith. But this was just the foundation of my own magical mystery tour of grace. My first memorized blessing was the classic: "God is great. God is good. Let us thank him for our food," though some years later I raised more than a few shocked aunty eyebrows by declaring, "Good gravy. Good meat. Good *God*, let's eat!"

By attending a Scout troop at a Quaker church, I grew fascinated by the idea of an inner light of God in every soul and the simplicity of Quaker ways. In high school, meanwhile, I fell hard for the transcendental writings of Henry Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, which naturally led me on to the sages of the East who heavily influenced them and a deepening love affair with the beautiful writings of ancient Hindu, Buddhist and Sufi poets, whose grasp of the beloved seemed to eclipse and inform my own evolving understanding of a loving force that can't be defined or contained by any particular religion or rigid doctrine.

To this day, as a result, wherever work or pleasure travels take me, I love turning up at a local cathedral, church, temple or synagogue simply to sit and soak up the music and prayers of the faithful. I even dig sitting in empty churches – recalling Emerson's famous remark that the silence before the service is often more powerful than any sermon.

Moreover, as I age, like my own father and his father before him, I find myself less inclined toward the social politics and endless theological squabbles of modern church life in favor of the simple splendor of nature and changing seasons, seeing more of God's presence in the smallest movements of the natural world, the silence of a vernal pool in spring, a walk along a leaf-strewn dirt road in fall, hungry birds at a winter feeder or my own growing garden come spring. The path to heaven, as a good and cheerful Buddhist friend of mine likes to say, is heaven itself.

During the two decades we lived on a forested hill in Maine, I claimed a granite rock looming over a hidden stream in the woods behind my house where the dogs and I used to go sit for an hour or so once a week, my private woodland cathedral, my personal philosopher's stone where I retreated to just sit and think or not think, to simply observe and be observed by sovereigns of the forest. Invariably, I wound up counting my blessings.

ILLUSTRATION BY KIRA SCHOENFELDER

Once, on a book tour, a radio interviewer asked me what religion I practiced.

Without thinking, I joked that I was probably unfit for any religion that would have me, per se, but was essentially a "Southern Transcendentalist and practicing Quaking Buddho-Episcotarian with a strong fondness for old timey Baptist hymns and a good Methodist covered dish homecoming supper on the lawn."

"Is that, like, a real religion?" she wondered.

"Yes ma'am. With only one known practicing member, I'm afraid."

When our own spiritual wayfaring progeny agree to say grace over a holiday meal and come out with a rambling exhortation about the shrinking Arctic shelf or the perils to the planet of an unchecked military industrial complex, I simply thank God for their own growing awareness of the world they are inheriting.

Saying grace is, after all, simply a form of prayer — a conversation between heaven and human beings as diverse as human society itself, dating back thousands of years before any single religion got itself organized. "Pray," wrote the blind poet Homer, "for all men need the aid of the gods."

Not surprisingly, prayers of gratitude or thanksgiving are among the oldest hymns of man, recorded as far back as ancient Mesopotamia. In every society the act of giving thanks to a higher power for the abundance of field and table is one of the most commonly defining elements of human civilization.

America's first Thanksgiving celebration at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1621, was essentially a communal prayer of thanks to God for providing the food that sustained their fledgling colony in a dangerous new world. Saying grace from that day forward invariably took the form of thanking God as well as the hands that made the meal.

For more than two decades, even my Scottish mother-in-law, a wise old agnostic with a deeply tender heart, grasped the power of this idea and loved to lead us all in her favorite childhood grace — *"Some hae meat and canna eat. Some hae meat and want it. But we hae meat and we can eat and so the Lord be thankit!"*

Lately I've been researching potential new blessings and graces for our New Age Turkey Day table where the Southern-fried Transcendental patriarch always gets to say a few words of thanks as the tapers are lit and hands joined. Lately, I find, the fewer the better.

A sampling of this year's leading contenders:

*"Do good and don't look back."* – Dutch proverb

*"He prayeth best who loveth best; all things both great and small."* – from "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

*"If your only prayer was thank you – that would be enough."* – Meister Eckhart

*"A table is not blessed if it has fed no scholars."* – Yiddish proverb

*"Blessed are we who can laugh at ourselves, for we shall never cease to be amused."* – Anonymous

*"Grub first, the ethics."* – Bertolt Brecht

*"Eat your bread with joy, drink your wine with a merry heart."* – Book of Ecclesiastes

*"May the love that's in my heart pass from my love to yours."* – Traditional American blessing

*"Thou hast given me much. Give me one more thing – a grateful heart."* – George Herbert, English poet and pastor

Somehow, hands joined, this just says Thanksgiving to me.

*Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com.*

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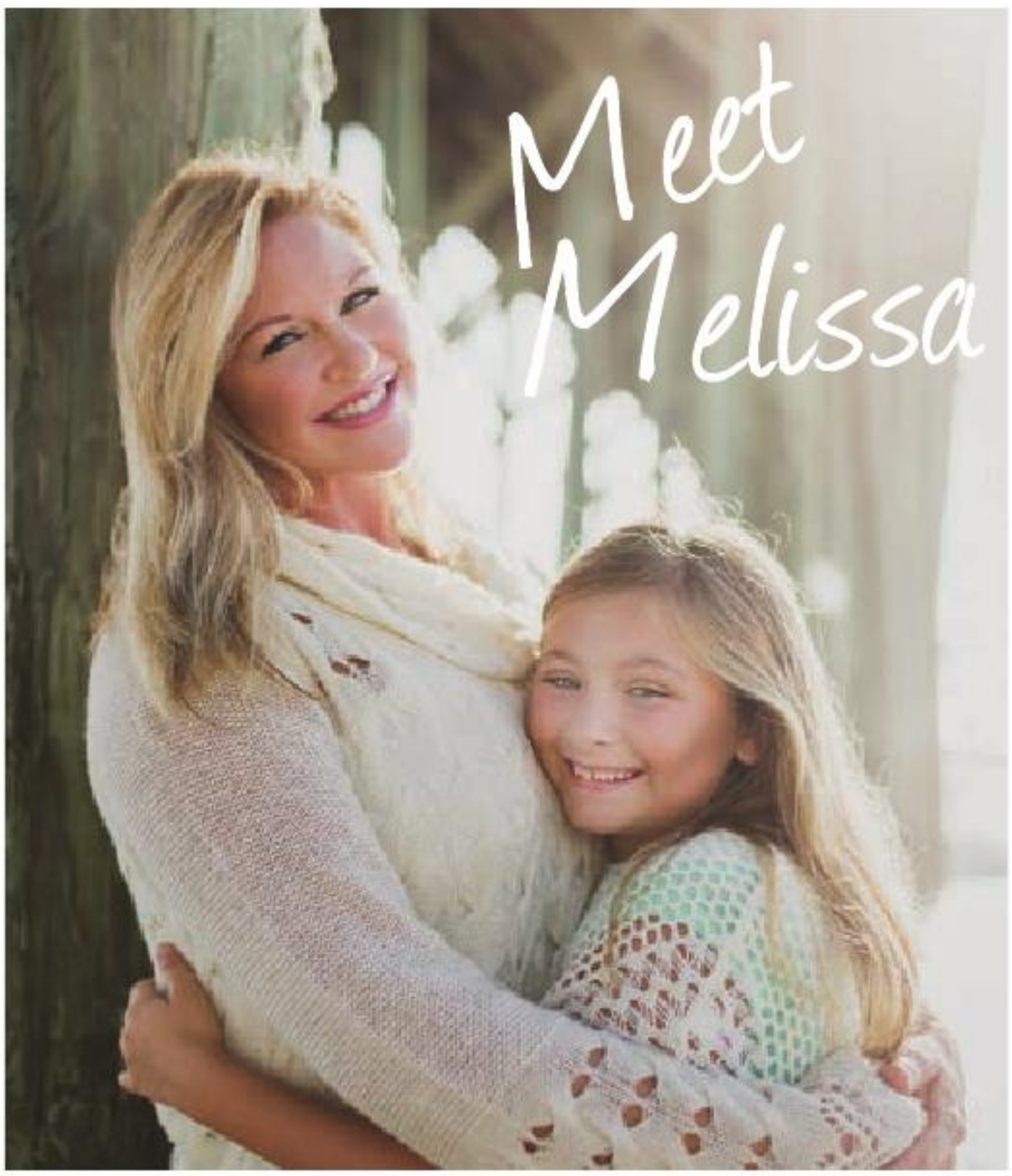


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**Perfect Day** Line dancing, wild caught fish for dinner, watching my daughter ride horses & my twin sons surf

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# SaltWorks

## Sounds Delicious

This time of year, the name conjures up an image of the breakfast dish you might expect your favorite aunt to whip up in attempt to make use of the leftover turkey (see Fred Chappell's poem on page 43). But once you experience Strata, the internationally acclaimed classical trio coming to the stage of Thalian Hall on Sunday, November 2, at 3 p.m., the idea of layers will take on new but equally scrumptious meaning. Musical talents Audrey Andrist (piano), Nathan Williams (clarinet) and James Stern (violin and viola), all of whom hold Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the Juilliard School, have been performing together for over twenty years. Strata has charmed crowds at Carnegie Hall, the Marlboro Festival, the Kennedy Center and venues across four continents. *The Washington Post* once described them as an act "worth getting worked up about." We say they sound delicious. Event raises funds for the Wilmington Concert Association. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Tickets: $30. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.wilmingtonconcert.com.

## Fairy Tale Forest

The grand opening of the Cape Fear Festival of Trees — Party in the Pines — happens on Friday, November 21, from 6–9 p.m. Live music by the Keith Butler Trio and Benny Hill plus tasty hors d'oeuvres amid a winter wonderland of holiday trees sponsored and decorated by local businesses, organizations and individual artists. Leave your tacky Yuletide sweaters at home. Tonight: holiday cocktail attire. Party in the Pines tickets are $35 in advance, $45 at the door. Festival tickets: $13/adult; $6/children. Group rates available. Proceeds from Tree sponsorships benefit Lower Cape Fear Hospice and LifeCareCenter; ticket sales benefit CAM. Trees on display through December 7. Prepare to be dazzled. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.capefearfestivaloftrees.org.

## Food for Thought

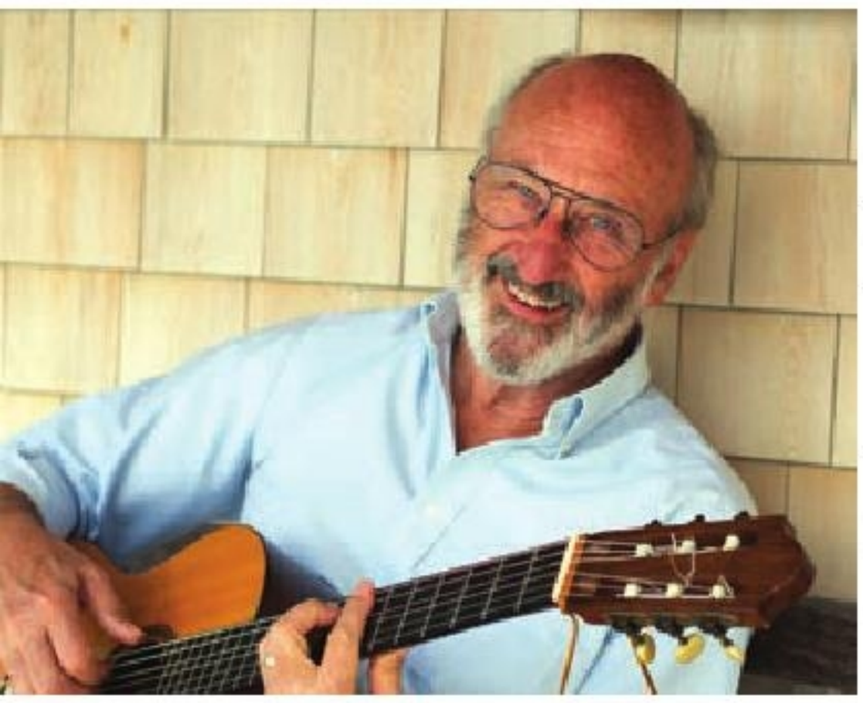
UNCW Writer's Week concludes on Friday, November 7, with a farm-to-table family-style supper where the courses are complemented by excerpts from *Ecotone* magazine's fall "Sustenance" issue. Publisher Emily Smith says the passed-dish meal will bring back the lost art of supper. "We hope that it will also spark dialogue about food traditions and sustainability." Acclaimed writers Alison Hawthorne Deming and Randall Kenan will wax lyrical on raising hogs and eating collard greens, but even the menu sounds like poetry: apple-cider brined chicken breast with whole grain mustard-maple glaze; smokey-citrus pan-roasted Carolina shrimp with Cottle Farms chow-chow; Shelton Farms apple and cranberry bread pudding and more. Vegan and vegetarian options available. Guests go home with a copy of *Ecotone*'s latest issue. Soup's on at 6 p.m. Tickets: $50. Proceeds benefit Feast Down East and *Ecotone*, the university's national award-winning literary magazine of place and environment. UNCW's Kenan Hall Courtyard, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: ecotonesupper.brownpapertickets.com.

## The Hot Ticket

Cannes is much bigger. Toronto and Sundance, too. But with screenings of more than 200 films from around the globe scheduled for this year's twentieth anniversary festival, it's safe to say that Cucalorus has become a full-blown attraction. The 2014 Cucalorus Film Festival, which happens November 12–16, will draw thousands of filmmakers, artists and underground movie buffs to downtown Wilmington to celebrate art and encourage creative exchange in a non-competitive, non-threatening environment. With nearly sixty-five features (we're talking everything from low-budget independent comedies to sociopolitical documentaries) and 150 short films to choose from, there is something for everyone. Highlights include Kids-a-Lorus (family films program), outdoor screenings of *King Kong* and *Flash Gordon*, plus a Dino De Laurentiis Restrospective, which includes screenings of *War & Peace*, *Hannibal* and *Crimes of the Heart*, with a Q&A with Martha De Laurentiis following the screening. Screening tickets are $10/regular; $15/premium. Visit the Cucalorus website for complete schedule or to search for films by program or genre. Information: www.cucalorus.org.

## Painters by Numbers

Art for the Masses (AFTM), which takes place Saturday, November 22, from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., features original fine art — available for $250 or less — from over 150 local artists. What's best is participating artists retain 100 percent of the proceeds from their sales. Coordinated through Campus Life Arts & Programs and the Department of Art & Art History, AFTM is free and open to the public with a requested door donation to help fund public arts projects at the university. UNCW's Burney Center & Warwick Center. Info: www.uncw.edu/artforthemasses.



## Pure Musical Magic

In the February 2014 issue of *Salt*, editor Jim Dodson wrote about the new Stella Concertmaster guitar he received for his eleventh birthday, and how his father arranged for him to meet Peter, Paul and Mary backstage after one of their concerts. "As it worked out," wrote Dodson, "Paul Stookey and Peter Yarrow stuck around to chat with a cluster of wide-eyed kids and even allowed me to briefly play one of Paul's guitars. He was amused when I strummed the chords of 'Puff the Magic Dragon,' their own hit song on the charts that faraway winter half a century ago." Time hasn't dimmed the magic. On Saturday, November 22, 8 p.m., the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra presents "An Evening of Song with Noel Paul Stookey." Program includes hits like "Blowin' in the Wind," "If I Had a Hammer," "The Wedding Song" and the 1963 folk classic inspired by the imaginary adventures of childhood that seemed to have everyone singing — and strumming — along. Symphony Pops tickets are $40; $20 for children and students. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

## The Indie Buzz

*Pssst!* Have you checked out the Sonorous Music Festival lineup? We're talking forty-plus national, independent and emerging artists from all over the country — including homegrown favorites Chasing Eden (rock) and Delta Son (Americana) — and abroad. Friday, November 7, through Sunday, November 9, the Port City music scene will feel more like Portland's. It's encompassing. Acoustic, alternative, country, folk, hard rock, hip-hop, pop, punk, you name it. Participating venues include City Limits, Gravity Records, Bourgie Nights, Bottega, Brooklyn Arts Center, Long Streets, Ortons and Calico. See website for complete schedule. Wristband: $25/day; $35/weekend; $75/VIP. Info: www.sonorousmusicfestival.com.

## Ship with Love

Veterans Day Weekend, Coast Guard Cutter *Diligence VI* will be the shining star of several events in honor of its fiftieth anniversary. Saturday, November 8, the Navy League will host the fourth annual DILIGolf Tournament to raise funds for veterans' causes at Lower Cape Fear Hospice and Cape Fear Community College. That evening, the Wilmington Harbor Enhancement Trust will host a dinner for current and former *Diligence* crew members at CFCC's Union Station. On Saturday, November 8, and Sunday, November 9, *Diligence VI* will be open for public tours from noon until 5 p.m., but interactive Sunday tours will provide insight into Coast Guard missions and offer a glimpse of life onboard this diesel-powered ship. A formal ceremony will be held on Tuesday, November 11, 2 p.m., at Coast Guard Moorings in Wilmington to honor *Diligence VI* and recognize her fifty years of service to the country. To register for the golf tournament, visit www.diligolf14.eventbrite.com. For more information on *Diligence VI*, visit www.uscg.mil/lantarea/cgcDiligence/history.asp.

## Doggie Treats

Ever watched a clip of abstract expressionist artist Jackson Pollock working on one of his famous drip paintings? It's not unlike watching 11-year-old Netop, the painting pooch whose work is hanging alongside Jacqueline Karch's in *Through Our Eyes*, a joint exhibit on display at MC Erny Gallery now through January 9. An accomplished artist, especially in the realm of ceramics, Karch's exhibited work includes recent figure studies in various mediums. But good luck getting her to talk about herself. Like a proud mother, she'd much rather brag on Netop, who she adopted with husband, Bill Keach, in 2003. Netop paints with non-toxic, commercial grade food coloring and custom-made paintbrushes held in his mouth. Proceeds from the sale of Netop's paintings will be donated to the Wilmington Domestic Violence agency. See the artist at work at a reception scheduled for Friday, November 28, from 6–9 p.m. MC Erny Gallery at WHQR, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.whrq.org.

## Out of the Park

What, you might ask, could be a more perfect way to spend the holidays than packed like a sardine inside a mobile home with your yokel neighbors as the howling winds of a tropical storm threaten to wipe you off the planet? The addition of spiked Sunny D, of course. Friday, November 21, through Sunday, December 21, TheatreNOW presents *A Trailer Park Christmas*, a rollicking holiday dinner show from Durham writers Rachel Klem and Jeffrey Moore that invites you inside the home of Meemaw Hussey at Whispering Pines Trailer Park. Meet Lorraine and Dale Dodson, Meemaw's daughter and son-in-law (no traceable link to *Salt* editor Jim Dodson); their kids, Dale Jr. and Jolene; and a whole mess of neighbors, including Ratsnake, Eddie Mac Taylor and Fancy Nancy. Will a hurricane blow away the trailer park? Will Meemaw have to hock her spoon collection to pay the light bill? Lord knows. See website for schedule and menu. Tickets: $42 (dinner and show); $24 (show only and children under 12). Y'all come. Meemaw fixed plenty. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

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# Queen of the Roost

*Out on Greenville Loop Road, young Savannah Brookman is one with her flock*

By Ashley Wahl

**Six-year-old** Savannah Brookman is all business. Well, sorta. At least if you get her talking about Greenville Coopers.

"Half a dozen eggs will cost you two dollars," she says, readjusting her stretchy pink headband before reaching for another plump strawberry to feed her flock. "A full dozen is four."

Since last March, Savannah has been caring for the seven chickens who roam in the Brookmans' backyard on Greenville Loop Road. Of course her parents help. A lot. But if you're interested in having farm fresh eggs hand-delivered to your front door, you're going to have to speak with the Queen of the Roost. Not Winn-Dixie, who is famous for pecking at the larger hens and, occasionally, the well-manicured toe. At Greenville Coopers (named by the girl with the shark's tooth necklace and tie-dyed T-shirt), Savannah Brookman is head of sales and marketing.

Which is why the neighbors call her The Egg Lady.

*

Savannah speaks chicken.

*"Giiiiirrrrrllllls!"* she shrieks, her voice vibrating at the frequency of an electric fiddle.

As an answer to her call, the hens bolt across the yard, abandoning the dwindling herb garden for the promise of some other tasty treat. Chinese rice is their favorite, but they never turn down corn on the cob, raspberries or succulent fruit.

"Don't you dare peck my nails!" The Egg Lady lectures one of her cinnamon queens, Edweena, who is pecking at a strawberry dangling just out of reach.

As the lady birds take turns nipping for the fruit, Savannah listens to the chorus of coos, clucks and warbles.

"Mom! Sounds like there's something wrong with Cosmo," she observes, pointing at the smallest of the two barred Plymouth rocks. She imitates the hen's distinctive utterance, which to the untrained ear sounds no different from the chatter produced by the Rhode Island reds, Bella and Talulah, or even Mookie (Big Mama), the other barred rock.

Winn-Dixie is arguably the most striking bird, but Savannah has no qualms about picking favorites.

"Izzy Anne," she answers without having to think about it.

Her explanation reveals they're kindred spirits: "You know how they say, 'Think outside of the box'?" Savannah asks. "Well, Izzy Anne thinks outside of the pack."

*

Greenville Coopers has five customers, all of whom live in the neighborhood and receive weekly or biweekly deliveries by way of golf cart. Matt Brookman drives while his daughter holds on to the eggs. Take Savannah's word: Running a business is not as easy as it looks.

Keeping up with the demand, Savannah's chickens collectively churn out about six eggs per day, which still leaves a sizable stock for the Brookman household.

And just how, exactly, do they taste?

"Oh my gosh," says Savannah. "They're better than store eggs."

She eats them scrambled, fried, hard-boiled and poached, but the best way to eat them is as Birds in a Nest. Wait, make that over-medium.

"I put ketchup all over my plate and dip it in ketchup," she says.

Oh my gosh.

*

As Lisa Brookman watches her daughter scoop up Winn-Dixie, the multi-colored hen Savannah has dubbed the "Chicken of the Fall" — because she has all the colors of the leaves on her, says The Egg Lady — she recalls her own childhood in Rochester, New York.

"My mom had like fifty chickens when she was a kid," says Savannah, whose blue eyes fill with light at the thought of so many.

*Fifty.*

Still, Lisa insists the backyard chickens were purely Savannah's idea.

"I'd never told her about mine until she wanted chickens of her own."

Savannah says she had a plan all along:

"Before we got the chickens, I was like, 'Well, let's sell these eggs.'"

*

If you want chickens of your own, Savannah has some advice.

First, avoid wearing red toenail polish: "They're not really attracted to blue, but if you wear dark red, watch out. One time, Winn-Dixie pecked my grandma's toe . . ."

Also, and this is very important, try not to get too attached to the cute little frogs who like to visit your yard: Chickens are omnivores, says Savannah. They eat frogs. "And I don't even know what they do with the bones!"

*Our spy, senior editor Ashley Wahl, is prone to wander.*

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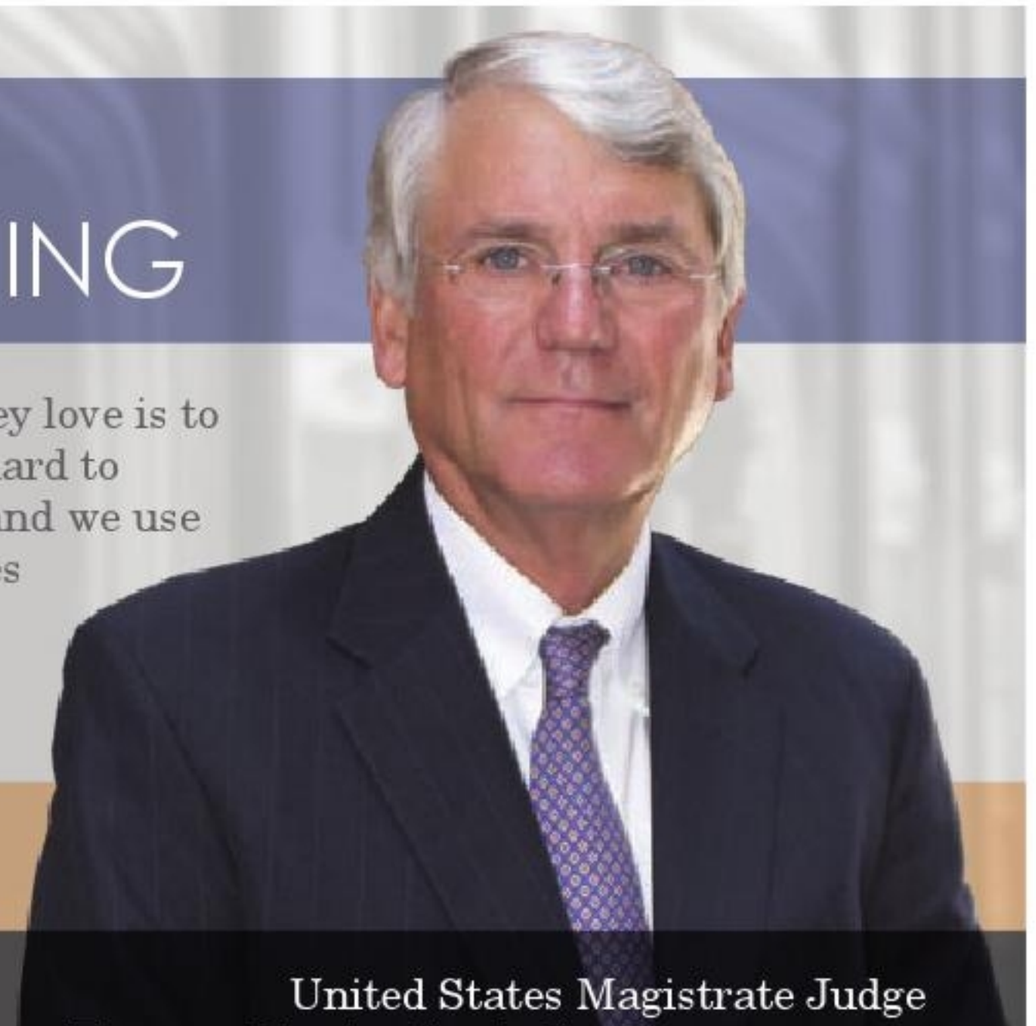

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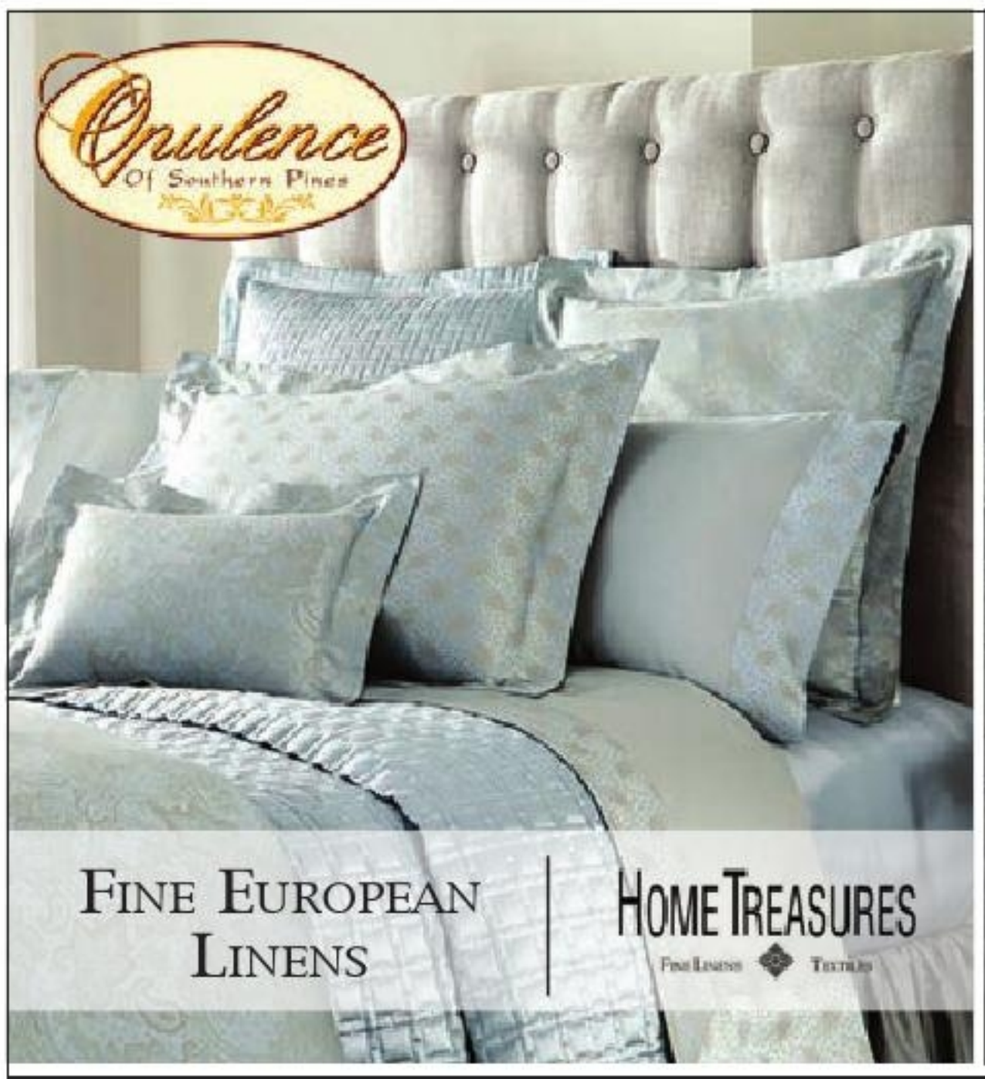

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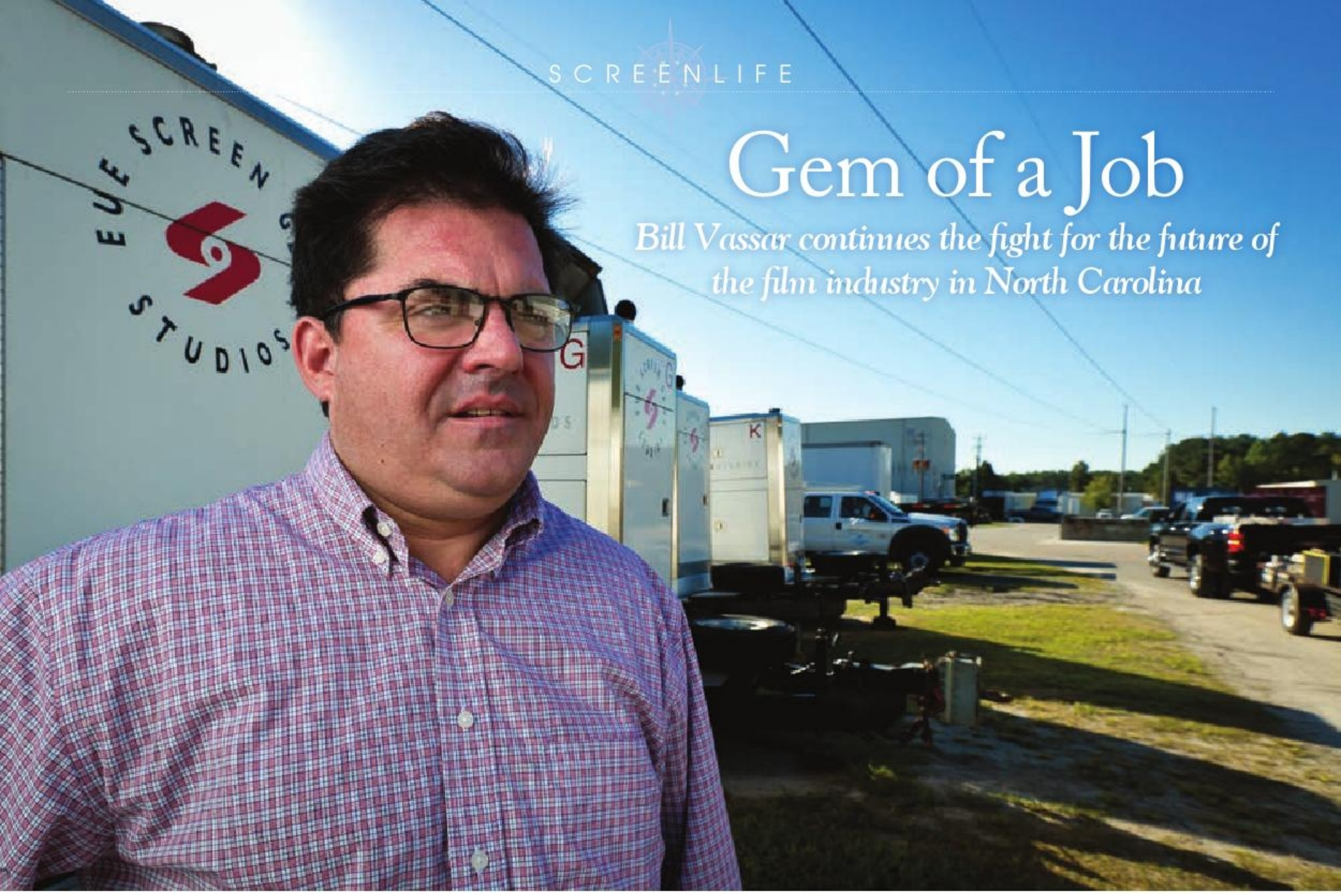
# Gem of a Job

## *Bill Vassar continues the fight for the future of the film industry in North Carolina*




PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

By Gwenyfar Rohler

"I've worked every day since I was 16 in the media — or at least every week," says Bill Vassar, chuckling with delight. We are in his office at the movie studio, the noise and bustle of calls and visitors audible in the background. But his grin and the twinkle in his eye tell me that Vassar is back in 1967 in New England. In high school, he worked part time as "everybody's fill-in guy." He recalls working at three different radio stations — all in different markets, all within biking distance of each other. Christmas Day would find him covering disc jockey shifts instead of at home with his family. "Oh, you can't get anyone on Christmas? Call Vassar." He grins and shakes his head. "I just loved it."

Bill Vassar of EUE/Screen Gems in Wilmington is filled with the intensity of focused ambition mixed with the joy that comes from doing work you really love — a joy that bubbles over into ebullient laughter when he talks about working the pilot for *The Cosby Show* or how he got hired at Screen Gems. With that velvety, almost hypnotic voice, it's not hard to believe that he started in radio, but with his thick, dark hair and good looks, I can't help but wonder why he wasn't on camera.

He's had an incredible career working at NBC, on the forefront of 3-D set simulation, producing specials about the *Time*'s "100 Most Influential People" with *60 Minutes*, owning a radio station and continuously working on projects that interested him. But really it all happened because of his seventh-grade teacher, Vassar says. "She knew I was interested in radio and television, so she said, 'Why don't you call Mr. Putnam and see if he'll come talk to the class about editorials?'" Mr. Putnum owned the first commercial UHF television station in the country. It was in Springfield, Massachusetts, near Vassar's school.

"I called Mr. Putnam." Vassar nods his head and swallows hard at the memory. "He took my call!" His voice fills with the surprise of a 12-year-old who suddenly feels very, very grown-up. Putnum came to talk to the class and Vassar managed to get up the courage to tell him that he wanted to be in television. To Vassar's amazement, Putnum invited him to come by the TV station.

Fast forward from the late 1960s to 2014. "It's my seventeen-year anniversary with the company this week," Vassar observed when we met.

"Congratulations," I responded. Vassar begins to tell me he didn't have a job description when he first got hired — just direction to wear a jacket and tie. A friend warned him that this was a bad idea; if he didn't have a job description, he could get fired and never know why. Vassar responded that it wasn't that kind of company or that kind of relationship. It was more about

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learning how George Cooney of EUE/Screen Gems did things: learning people's names, reading contracts and getting to know how the relationships worked from the big clients like *Guiding Light* to the Waste Management people.

But the jacket and tie were important. Cooney was adamant that Vassar establish himself as a manager. "I came out of broadcast," he muses. "I never worked in film or dramatic television in my life." Then, about eleven years ago, he took over the day-to-day operation of EUE/Screen Gems Studios in Wilmington and a new era for the film industry was born here.

The movie studio on 23rd Street was built by Dino DeLaurentiis in the early 1980s. It changed hands a couple of times before George Cooney purchased the facility in the mid-'90s. Vassar commuted from the New York facility to Wilmington for several years until Cooney decided he was ready for this investment to get more attention.

"George asked me one day, 'So what do we have to do to jump-start that place down there?'" Vassar recalls. At the beginning of the 2000s, the Canadians were luring film work north of the border and our city, whose streets had once been paved with gold from film money, was languishing with the occasional commercial and one TV series. "You've got to get an incentive so that you can draw that business back that's fled to Canada," Vassar responded. Within weeks he found himself knee-deep in the efforts to get a film incentive passed in North Carolina.

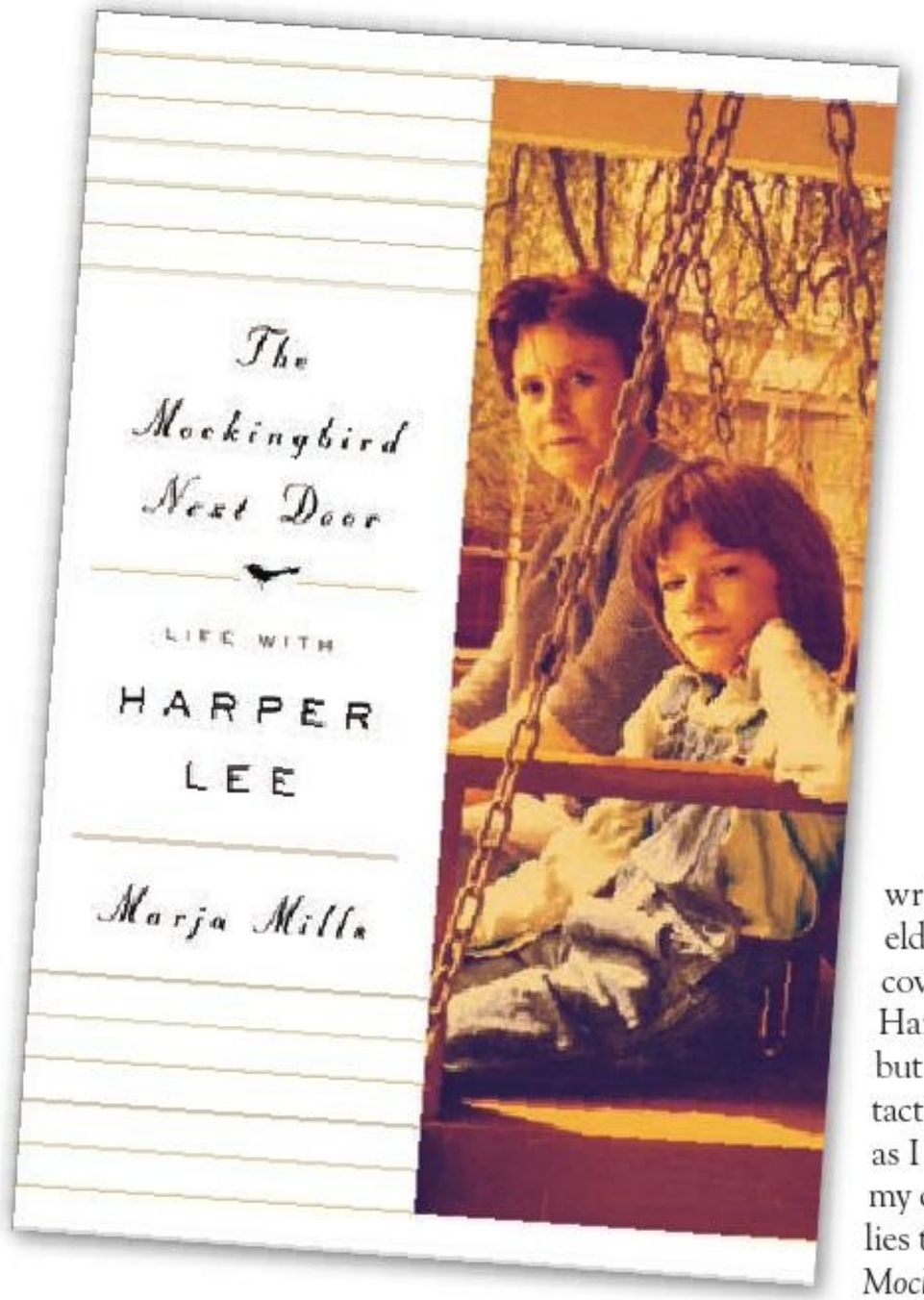
"I was being sarcastic," Vassar claims. But Cooney was serious and ready to act. So was the crew base here who rallied behind the proposed bill. Vassar points out that our incentive is actually one of the lowest in the nation, "But because we have a world-class crew here — and the infrastructure is more than just the studio — it's lumber yards, and car rental places, and the hotels, and the industrial machinery people that all understand how to service the [film] industry." He vibrates with intensity and pauses for a breath. "It blows people away when they come here. I had one producer come through here . . . and she said 'I've never had a full service plug-n-play facility to work at when I go on the road.'"

Vassar has been out front fighting for the future of the film industry here — not just because of Screen Gems, but all the people who have made Wilmington a place to work and call home. "I wouldn't trade our experiences here for anything else," he says after a moment of quiet deliberation.

*Gwenyfar Rohler fell in love with theater at Thalian Hall on her sixth birthday. She spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.*

# Nobody's Business but Her Own

*A neighborly slice-of-life glimpse into the life of Harper Lee*




By Stephen E. Smith

**Ask a few** of your more literate friends if they can identify the source of this line: ". . . and he would be there when Jem waked up in the morning."

It's likely one of them will tell you that it's from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The use of "waked up," a childlike expression that's charmingly Southern, strikes a memorable note with many readers. Even folks who haven't read the novel remember the final line of narration from the movie.

Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel is one of those rare works of fiction that's had a cultural impact, capturing a time and place where racial injustice was the norm and suggesting the possibility of a kinder, more inclusive America. It's surprising there haven't been bushels of literary biographies, memoirs and first-person exposés exploring the life of one of the South's more influential writers. But, then, Lee hasn't been the least bit cooperative. She's reportedly turned away every writer who's attempted to produce a definitive biography or memoir. I've read two recent Harper Lee bios, neither of which claimed to be "authorized," a distinction reserved for former *Chicago Tribune* journalist Marja Mills' *The Mockingbird Next Door: Life with Harper Lee*. Mills purportedly has a signed document from Alice Lee, the novelist's older sister, stating that Harper Lee approved of and participated in the writing of the book.

Enough said?

Not so. As soon as the Mills' bio/memoir appeared, Lee issued a statement from the nursing home where she's been confined since suffering a stroke in 2007: "Normally, I would not respond to questions about books written on my life. Miss Mills befriended my elderly sister, Alice. It did not take long to discover Marja's true mission; another book about Harper Lee. I was hurt, angry and saddened, but not surprised. I immediately cut off all contact with Miss Mills. . . . Rest assured, as long as I am alive any book purporting to be with my cooperation is a falsehood." And therein lies the controversy which has propelled *The Mockingbird Next Door* onto the best-sellers list.

This literary hubbub notwithstanding, Mills did not embark on a mission to produce the definitive authorized biography; she was assigned to write a newspaper story on Harper Lee for the *Chicago Tribune* to accompany the One Book, One City project, a reading program in which the residents of The Windy City would read and discuss *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Contrary to Lee's reputation regarding journalists, Mills found both Alice and Harper (friends and family call her Nelle) engaging and forthright. In fact, the sisters took Mills, who suffers from lupus, under their collective wing, finding her a rental house next door, and including her in day trips and family activities involving close friends. They did their laundry at the local wishy-washy, exercised together, fished, participated in casual book discussions, and visited Alabama historical sites.

Much of Mills' book is taken up with her own personal history and the routine of everyday life with Harper Lee: "On weekdays, Nelle quite often would invite me for an afternoon cup of coffee at McDonald's. We'd sit in the booth to the left of the main door or the first table over on the right-hand side. I'd ride along as she picked up Alice after work and then made the six-minute drive to the small lake down the hill from the Community House to feed the ducks and geese. As Nelle would slowly pull over and get the Cool Whip tub out of her truck, the ducks would offer the kind of noisy welcome that only they can." Blah, blah, blah. Harper Lee likes to

play the slots, she's capable of a moderate display of temper and can be forthright in her use of language, although she's never quite as surly as the typical curmudgeon.

As for the gossipy stuff readers have come to expect from biographies of significant literary figures, there's precious little juicy stuff to be had in Mills' account, especially of the literary sort. Lee describes Truman Capote as a "psychopath," who habitually lied about himself and others (Capote was Harper Lee's playmate when they were children and she immortalized him as "Dill" in *To Kill a Mockingbird*). She and Capote fell out after the success of *Mockingbird* and never spoke again. She appreciates Eudora Welty's work and dislikes Flannery O'Connor's Catholicism and her description of *To Kill a Mockingbird* as "a good book for children." (Mills writes that Lee "felt lucky *Mockingbird* was published when it was. Much later, and it might have been classified as young adult fiction and never reached the audience, and all the adults, it did.")

Who are Harper Lee's influences? When asked that question at a press conference for the publication of *Mockingbird*, Lee answered, "Oh, mostly 19th century, rather than 20th century, writers. Charles Lamb, Jane Austen, Thackeray, all that crowd."

And that's pretty much it.

According to Mills, Harper Lee is an interesting Southern woman who wrote a great novel and decided, for whatever reason, not to write another – and to paraphrase the old blues song, "It ain't nobody's business but her own." What's puzzling is that Lee objects to a book that does little more than describe a rather innocuous friendship, leaving readers who are devoted fans of *To Kill a Mockingbird* bemoaning the lack of introspection. At best, *The Mockingbird Next Door* is a sweet slice-of-life glimpse of small-town life in the American South. In the final accounting, *To Kill a Mockingbird* stands on its own, as do our other bildungsromans, *Catcher in the Rye* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

Mills' peek into the life of Harper Lee reminds us that we can look forward to similar bio/memoirs on J.D. Salinger (there are a slew of unauthorized offerings available), and that someday we'll no doubt be granted furtive glimpses into the lives of Thomas Pynchon and Cormac McCarthy, our other resident literary recluses.

As for Harper Lee, she was capable of forgiving herself for all the beautiful books she might have written but didn't. That in itself is no small accomplishment.

*Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is* A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com*

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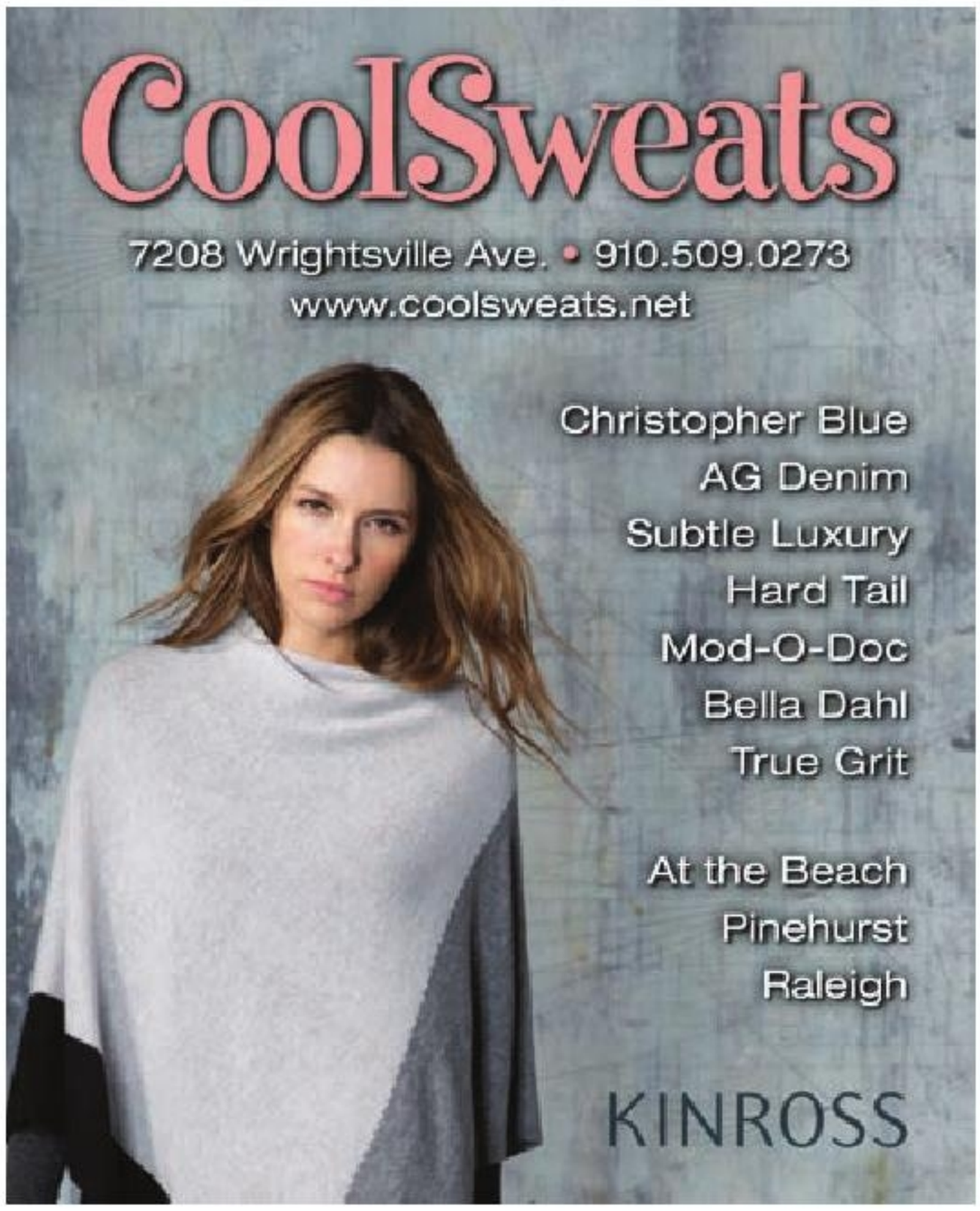
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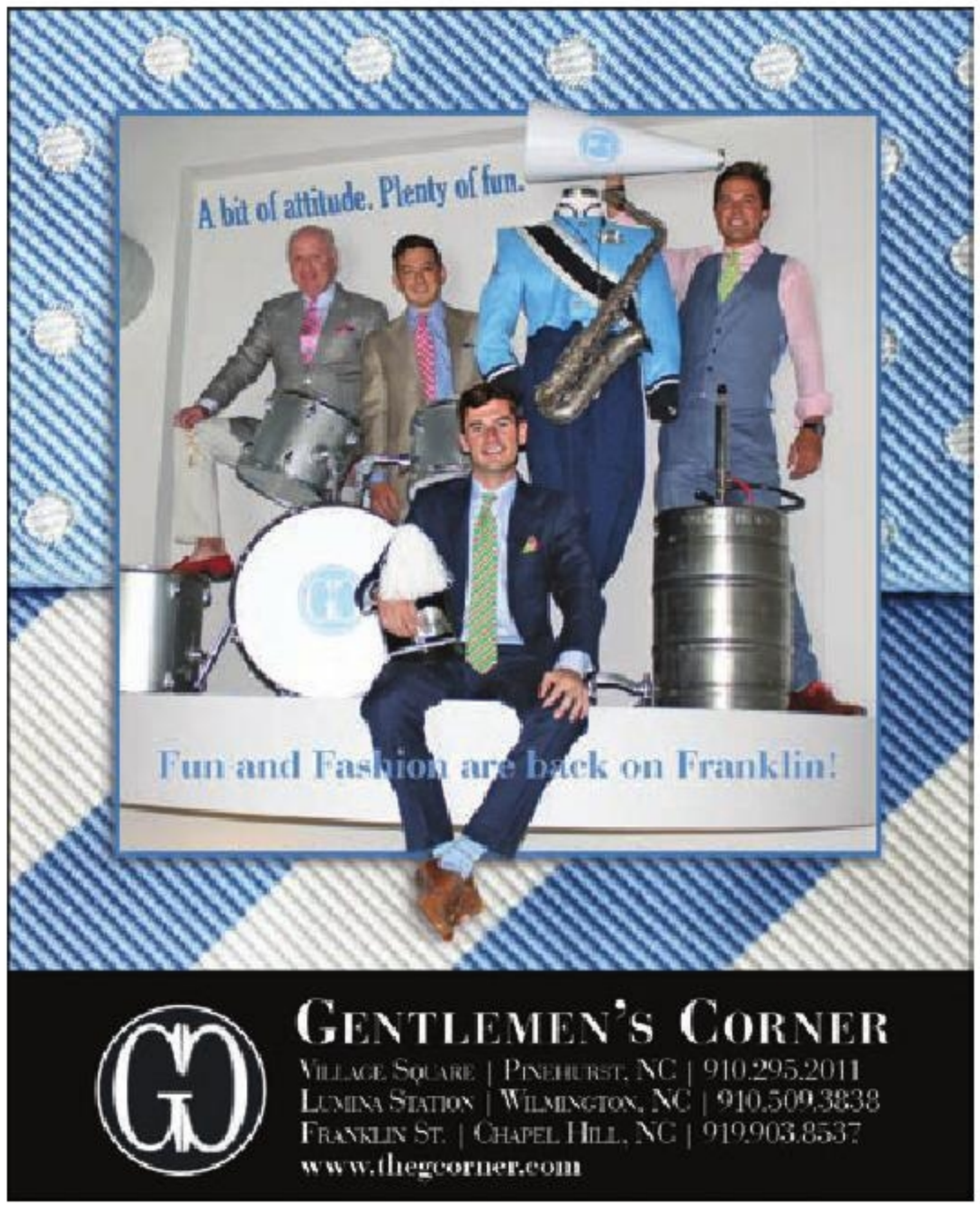
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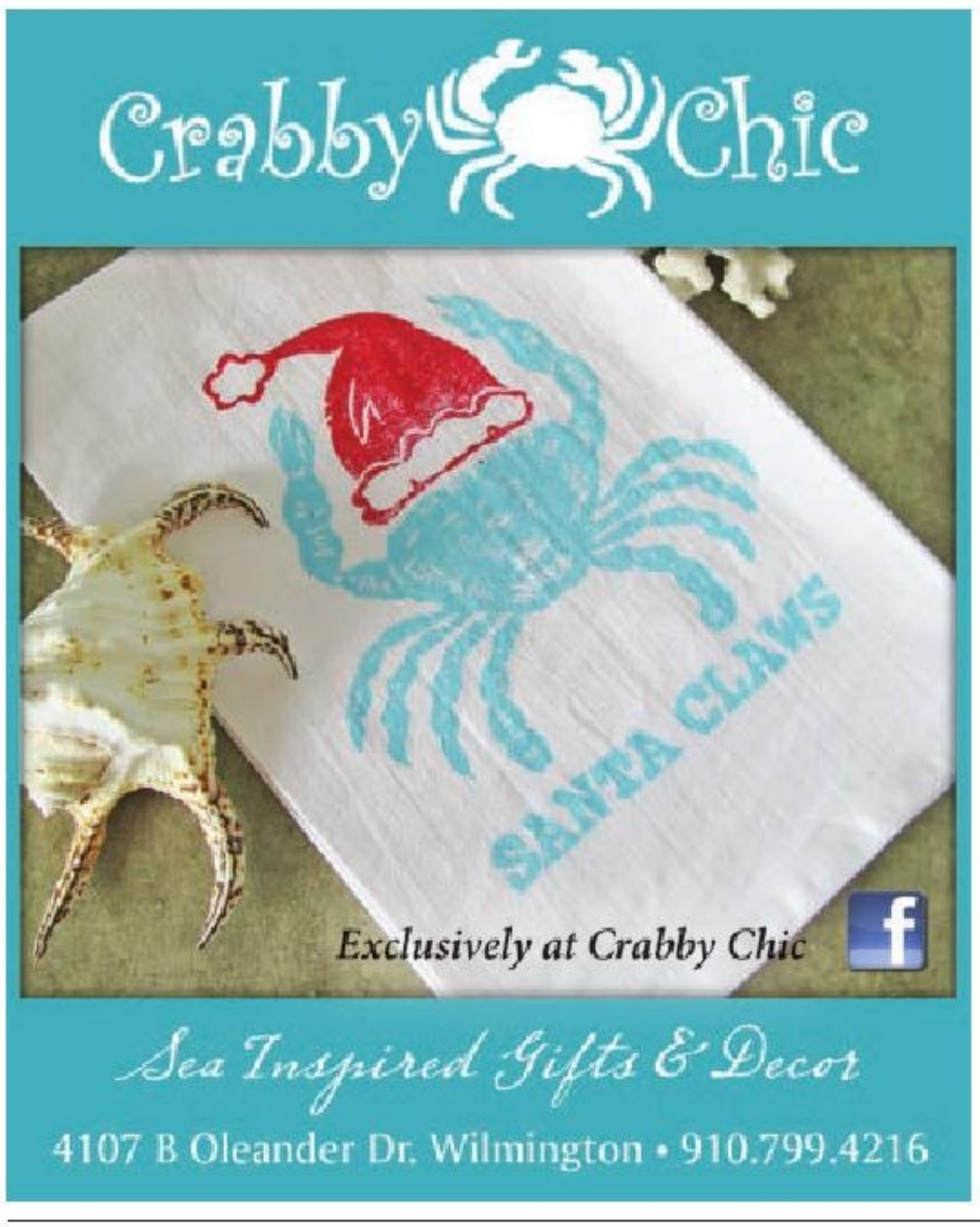
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*Best Reader Memoirs 2014*

# The Woman in Black

*Yiayia, Jeanne, Gigi and Anne*

By Georgia Routsis Savas

**Yiayia, my mother's mother,** came to live with us in 1974 after she had broken her hip. Yiayia wasn't like the other kids' grandmothers, and not just because we didn't call her Grandma, Granny, Nana or Meema. She was small-boned and tiny, about four-foot-ten, and her wardrobe consisted of one color: black.

Before you get the idea that she was one of those sophisticated and modern grandmothers, dressed up in a chic little black dress, pearls and heels, instead try to picture the old peasant women in *Zorba the Greek*. Yiayia's get-up consisted of a black housecoat dress, nude thigh-high stockings that were secured with giant rubber bands because they kept rolling down to knee-level, and "sensible" black slipper-shoes. Her stringy grayish hair was pulled up into a hair net-covered bun and her face, not surprisingly, was devoid of makeup. (Yiayia was a big believer in the "natural look" and almost lost it when I tweezed my eyebrows into the pencil-thin rounded arches of Marisa Berenson in *Cabaret*.) Like most old-time Greek women, Yiayia chose her particular Woman-in-Black ensemble for reasons other than sophistication. Yiayia wore black because she was in mourning. Permanently. You see, her husband had died back when Eisenhower was president. Other folks grieve, but let's be honest: Most Americans don't even wear black to funerals anymore. For Greek grandmothers, mourning is a way of life.

Having Yiayia around was fascinating. Her English vocabulary consisted of about seven words. She always carried Bazooka Bubble Gum and green jellied candies in her pockets. The bubble gum was a great score, but since those horrible squishy candies didn't have wrappers, they were invariably covered in black lint.

Yiayia spent much of her day watching television. She had a hard time distinguishing between TV life and real life. If she saw Lucille Ball in a movie kissing a man, Yiayia would panic because Lucy was married to Ricky Ricardo. One of her favorite shows was *To Tell the Truth*, though she had absolutely no idea what the guests were saying, let alone who was fibbing and who was stating the facts, which was the whole point of the show. Once, my father brought me, my sister and Yiayia to the taping of a game show in New York City. Witnessing the filming of a TV show was a big event for all of us, but for Yiayia it was truly monumental. The parallel worlds of TV and reality were melding right before her eyes. During a break in filming, the show's host, Ed McMahon, was fielding questions from the audience. Since my role in the family was that of "Theatrina" (Greek for movie star, since I was the kid who loved to perform), I had no choice but to ask Mr. McMahon a question. The question I asked him, "Have you ever thought of being a hippie?" is one that still haunts and embarrasses me to this day. But to my Yiayia's eyes and ears, my pathetic encounter with Ed was a brilliantly scripted television dialogue. Her Theatrina was now destined for stardom.

Besides watching TV, Yiayia also liked to cook and bake. Though that

concept sounds delicious, in reality, it was rather perilous. Her failing eyesight and poor hygiene made for a dangerous combo in the kitchen. The meal she prepared might taste good, but someone was destined to find the prize: a strand or two of her long, fine gray hair. As she got older, her kitchen activities quieted down. But every once in a while, Yiayia would get the itch to prepare one of her native dishes. Since my mother, Stella, was one of those anal housewives who wouldn't let anyone mess up her home, Yiayia was only allowed to use the kitchen the few times a year when her autocratic daughter wasn't at home. Before she left, my mother would gather all of the ingredients Yiayia needed and place them on the counter since: a) Yiayia would have no idea where to look for them, b) she could only reach a few cabinets since she was under five feet tall and, c) her days of using a stepladder were long gone. Once in a while, usually on a Saturday morning when my mother was at the beauty parlor, Yiayia would decide to improvise and yell up to my sister and me to help her find a certain ingredient. Since Anne and I were much more interested in sleeping late, we usually ignored her urgent requests. Which might explain why the dessert Yiayia once made for the church bake sale ended up with one cup of salt instead of a cup of sugar. The guilt sector of my soul likes to think the mistake was due to her senility and had nothing to do with my laziness.

*Niko, Anna, Stella and Gussie*

Every morning, Yiayia would plop herself on the couch, ready for another day of TV viewing. But first she would take her wallet out of her purse. Since she didn't drive and had no checkbook or credit cards, her wallet didn't resemble a normal wallet. Hers was filled with a few dollar bills, some crinkly pieces of paper and treasured photos of her late husband, aka, my Pappou, and her village in Greece. Each and every day, Yiayia would kiss the photograph of her beloved spouse, Niko, and the worn-out black and white snapshot of her birthplace, Platanos. Then she would close her eyes in a sort of reverent bliss, bring her thumb and first two fingers of her right hand together and move them up to her forehead, down to her bosom and across her chest to make the sign of the cross, which we called "doing the cross."

Yiayia provided us with endless hours of entertainment. She would carefully take out some crinkly papers scrawled with her relatives' contact information and head over to the rotary phone. The simple process of making a phone call was like microsurgery to Yiayia. After deciphering the digits, she'd painstakingly dial the numbers and hold the phone to her ear as if it were a tool of the devil. Then she'd utter a guttural "Hello?" followed with the intended's name only to invariably hang up the phone within seconds. When we would ask Yiayia who she was calling, she'd tell us "no one home." Of course, each month's phone bill would list a handful of one-minute calls to a faraway state, each bearing a number that was a digit or two off from my uncle or aunt's phone number.

As irreverent teenagers, we loved messing with Yiayia's head. Once, when I was about 18 or 19, I told her I didn't know how babies were made. At first she didn't believe me, especially since my boyfriend often slept over in my bedroom.

But I persisted in asking so she finally spilled the beans. My Yiayia's version of the creation of life was pretty cut-and-dried: She told me that a man takes you into the fields, pulls your dress up and then it hurts. It's a good thing I heard this bit of information after I was already having sex or I would have remained a virgin for life.

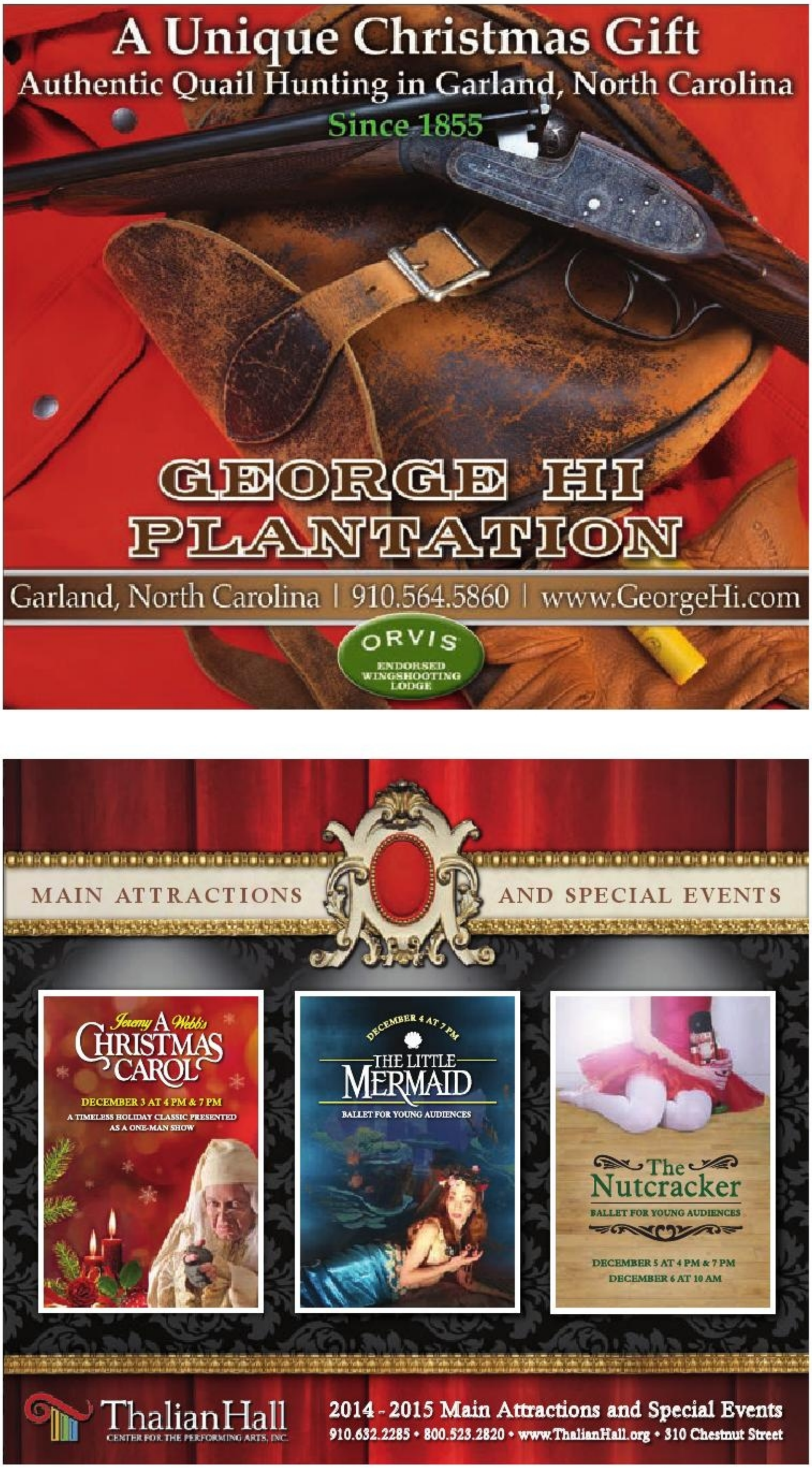
One Thursday night, in her 84th year, Yiayia took to her bed early, since she wasn't feeling well. The next morning, when Yiayia didn't come down for breakfast, we discovered that she couldn't get out of bed. Most people would have called the doctor, but as primitive Greeks, we just brought her breakfast up to her. It's not that we weren't worried. My mother immediately called her brother, sister and cousins, and they came over as soon as they could. By Saturday, our house was filled with relatives. Each person would take turns sitting with Yiayia up in the bedroom, holding her hand or stroking her forehead while Yiayia distributed her possessions. A bankbook to this one, a ring to that one, and so forth. Piece by piece, Yiayia divested herself of personal effects. Finally, on Sunday morning, it dawned on my family that things weren't looking good for Yiayia. So the call for the ambulance was made.

About ten minutes later, the doorbell rang. One of my many relatives opened the door to a pair of seriously butch broads. They were directed up to the bedroom and stayed there for a few minutes before hustling down the stairs, carrying Yiayia on a stretcher. These bruisers were all business. When they got down to the main floor, one of them asked, "How long has she been like this?" My mother meekly admitted, "Just a few days," which horrified the no-nonsense EMTs. As they were carrying Yiayia out of the house, they asked who wanted to ride with her in the ambulance. This question was pondered by my mother and aunt for a few moments, but before they could decide, one of the EMTs, who could have passed for a prison warden, told them to hurry and make up their minds. This was a serious case and they'd have to go "lights and sirens." When my mother asked what lights and sirens meant, she was told they would have to rush to the hospital with the ambulance lights blazing and sirens wailing. Though the precious woman who had given birth to her was lying semi-comatose on a stretcher and banging down death's door, there was only one thing on my mother's mind.

"Could you wait until we leave the neighborhood before you turn the lights and sirens on?" she asked.

Stella loved her mother, but that didn't mean the neighbors had to know she was dying, did it?

*Georgia Routsis Savas is an astrologer and writer living in Topsail Island.*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# Funny Guy

*At Dead Crow Comedy Room, some jokes are best left unsaid. Or not.*

By Jason Frye

Your table's just a little wobbly, but you don't mind because your jalapeño margarita won't stay full to the brim for long. Around you in this dim room, there's a palpable buzz. Jokesters at every table try to make their friends laugh, and laugh they do: titters pealing out of dark corners and chortles rising from the bar to commingle at the low ceiling like cigarette smoke. But you didn't come to make your friends laugh, and you surely didn't come because you thought you'd be the funniest man in the room (though you did have a fantasy that the middle act fell ill and they needed a replacement and some sweaty guy in a bad blazer would grab you, look you up and down, and say, "Kid, you look funny; you're up next," and push you on stage. And. You. Would. Kill.), you came to hear someone tell jokes and stories that make you laugh and make you see the world a little differently but, hopefully, don't make you pee your pants.

When the lights go down, the crowd whispers in anticipation until a bright voice cuts through the darkness, "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Dead Crow Comedy Room. Please welcome to the stage your host for the evening . . ." and then says a name you don't recognize but clap for anyway. The show has begun.

*

Comedy is a lot like cooking in that comedians get better with practice and the jokes they serve might not be to your taste. Dead Crow Comedy Room offers up laughs in a few flavors. Movie night, with comedies, cult classics, and the occasional unintentionally funny B-horror flick; comedy bingo, in which you fill in your bingo card with tropes and phrases from some budding standup's trial set; and improv night, where two improv troupes, one well-versed, one learning the ropes, take the tiny stage (which is really only about four inches tall, there is a low ceiling to contend with) and give their best *Iron Chef*-like efforts to make you laugh. Then there are the national touring comedians who play on Friday and Saturday nights, usually two shows, usually with an opener and a middle performer warming up the crowd.

One night before the first, and youngest, of the improv groups takes the stage, you eavesdrop on them from your corner barstool. They're "on" every moment, trying so hard to make the rest of the group laugh. Throw out a line; it falls flat, a pause, then the group laughs if for nothing else than to applaud the teller's effort. Listening to it is exhausting. Thankfully, they're better on stage, earning their laughs not through the sheer will of it but because they're actually funny when it's showtime.

*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

Some comedians are storytellers, born with the gift of stringing words together so well and so fine they form a net with which they capture the audience and pull them in. Others are joke writers, posing questions and situations, then offering up a solution that's unexpected, playful, profane, maybe all of the above. There are the Mitch Hedberg one-liners, the Jeff Ross insult comics, the profane absurdists who love *The Aristocrats*, the punsters, and the wordplay guys who throw out these subtle joke grenades and move on to the next joke before they detonate. Like the headliner at one show, who was talking about his high school French teacher and how her hearing wasn't so good: In class, they'd count, "*Un*, *deux*, *trois*..." Except he didn't say *trois*. *Trois*, like *quatre*, was ditched in favor of some choice anatomical sound-alikes.

You see where this is headed.

*

Being funny on demand is the hardest thing I've ever done. At a party, I'm hilarious, but I'm a humor reactionary, a sort of comedic counter puncher. Ask me to tell a joke and I fall apart. So, how do you write comedy? I guess you just try until something fits, like those lead-in improv troupe comics at the corner of the bar.

After some soul searching (OK, after thinking about what I said in my friend's garage that had an audience of four very drunk people laughing until they wanted to pee), I decided I was one of these *Aristocrats*-loving absurdists. But if I were called on stage to pinch-hit for the missing Middle, what would I say? Would I say that when I'm in the shower performing a little below-the-belt hair maintenance, that I'm afraid one day I'll slice open the old "sackaroni" and out will fall something that resembles — but very much is not — a ball of yarn, and that my "ball of yarn" might begin to unravel, clogging the drain as I try to reel it in, but I just keep pulling and it keeps unraveling until there's nothing left except a handful of useless string?

Can I say this?

I can't say this, right?

I mean, what if I did and my mom heard it and then we had to have a conversation about man-scaping? Nobody wants to have that conversation.

I guess that means I just have to keep it to myself and try not to look so funny when I go out.

*Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of* Moon North Carolina *and* Moon NC Coast. *He's a barbecue judge, he rarely naps, and he's always on the road. Keep up with his travels at tarheeltourist.com.*

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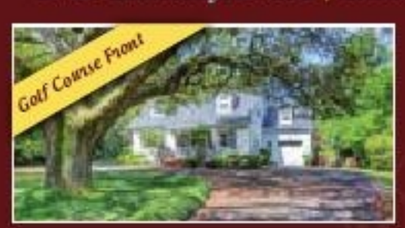

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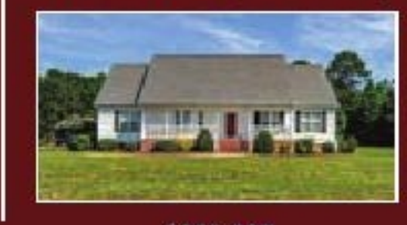

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# Everyone Is Psychic

*The gift of learning to accept your own intuition*

By Jennifer Chapis

**We were relaxing** on a pebbly Lake Tahoe beach, surrounded by the Sierra Nevada peaks, when Elaine announced that she was a telephone psychic.

It was summer 2000 at a writers' conference in California. I was a grad student from New York who displayed Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman on my living room bookshelves and stored unread spiritual books by Doreen Virtue and Sonia Choquette in a hidden closet inside my walk-in closet. Chatting with Elaine felt like light seeping under the door into a dark room.

"So you're really psychic?" I asked.

"Yes," Elaine said, nonchalantly sipping lemonade. "I help the police solve kidnapping cases too."

Here was a bilingual philosophy Ph.D. candidate in a conservative bikini, who carried a worn copy of the Tao Te Ching. She appeared grounded, yet she woke in the night because of visions she saw. I couldn't believe she told me, just like that!

*Why was her candidness surprising to me?* I wondered. I considered myself a transparent person. I published intimate poems about my sex life in literary journals. That made me more open than most, right? Revealing myself was second nature. Even the mailman knew my secrets. "Your essay meant a lot to me," he said as I signed for a package. "My mother was depressed, too." But there are levels of honesty. Denial was a clever trickster I didn't realize ran my life.

Several years passed before I understood why Elaine's admission shocked me. I was holding the phone with my chin when my sister unconcernedly mentioned that a doctor felt a lump on her thyroid, then without pause invited me to dinner at her pool. I almost dropped the phone. *It's cancer.* Somehow I just knew it. I felt the truth inside my body, physically pushing behind my eyes.

I come from a long line of intuitive women. My grandmother could walk into a grassy field at will and instantly locate a four-leaf clover. Not even a matchstick went missing in her house. She knew where to find things. My mother knew a plane was going down before Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 disappeared. She unexpectedly started obsessing about car accidents moments before we got nailed in a six-car pile-up on a northern interstate. And she knew her friend's sister was suicidal when no one else did.

Like Mom, whose foresight was so commonplace she didn't differentiate precognition from other thoughts, pure awareness popped into my head, too. Writing poems and offering friends life-saving advice seemed "normal" because it is. Everyone is psychic to some degree. The hairs standing on your neck alert you not to walk down a street; you have a dream that your daughter is smoking vapor cigarettes; you sense that your husband cheated on you. Too bad we often doubt ourselves. As a child, I was so nearsighted I could barely see my own hand, but I saw our dead cat Alex leap onto the couch. He casually stretched his legs, then closed his eyes and fell asleep. I had the distinct feeling he was telling me not to worry about him. I couldn't see there was nothing to be afraid of because I didn't recognize I was scared. It all happened too fast to decipher. I quickly convinced myself that I must've imagined him. I dismissed my perception because I didn't realize its purpose was to help me.

Elaine predicted my life would change when I "came out of the closet." I rejected this notion because I didn't understand it. She wasn't referring to my sexuality, but she was talking about publicly admitting who I am. She knew I was Emily Dickinson on the outside and Doreen Virtue on the inside. I'd unconsciously hidden my passion and ability because revealing myself meant revealing my mother, too. I'm glad Elaine didn't try to convince me that the laws of the universe weren't what I was taught they were, because I wouldn't have believed her then. I was too afraid to take responsibility for things I knew. Seeing was a choice I wasn't ready to make.

There's a connection between speaking the truth and allowing myself to see it. Thankfully, the discomfort of rejecting my intuition eventually outweighed the fear of knowing myself and other people. I went from uptight to relaxed when I decided to slow down and trust my own firsthand experience.

When my sister and I hung up, I heard these words in my head: *The thyroid is connected to the throat chakra.* I didn't know what that meant. I closed my eyes to let light into a closet within a closet. To allow a door within me to open. I watched a rapid slideshow with my inner eye: Five-year-old Nadine crying quietly in her bedroom because she mistakenly assumed our parents were giving her away; Nadine demanding I write her school paper without trying first herself; Nadine putting up with an obnoxious friend . . . The message felt undeniable: *She needs to learn to express herself.*

I wanted to help. I was ready to discover my voice, too.

*Jennifer Chapis is a writer and energy healer who helps people recognize their unique talents, whatever they are, and share them for the benefit of others. Find her at www.allovehealing.com.*

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# A Thimble of Love

*Like the ancient parlor game I learned as a little girl, I hold tight to what I was finally given*

By Caroline Hamilton

When I was a little girl spending Christmas at my grandparents' house in North Carolina, we played a game called "Who Has the Thimble?" While the adults were still sitting around the mahogany dinner table, my grandfather would catch my eye and wink, signaling me to grab a thimble from my grandmother's sewing drawer.

The game was a variant of duck, duck, goose. The person who was "it" walked around the table clasping the thimble. Everyone else held his or her hands in prayer position, making a sliver of an opening into which the thimble-carrier might drop the prize.

"Hold tight to what I give you," the thimble-carrier said to each person, pretending to drop the thimble into his or her hands. I sat tensely, always hoping it would drop into my palms, but it rarely did.

Then we all began guessing: Did my Eagle Scout cousin, Harris, who could walk on his hands, have the thimble? Did one of my glamorous aunts, with freshly manicured fingernails, have the thimble? Did my grandfather, whose Parkinson's made him a bit too shaky to really play, somehow have the thimble after all? Sometimes I'd hear the clink of tin on a gold ring, and realize that Uncle Hugh had the thimble.

One by one, each family member who was guessed burst open his or her hands saying, *Nope! Not me! I do not have the thimble!* Sometimes you could guess around the whole circle before the dead last person finally raised his with the shiny thimble on his pinky.

After college, I moved to New York, where I came to compare the thimble game of my childhood to my love life. Dating was a game of looking and guessing, praying that my future husband had been delivered to my circle by a playful nymph, and all I had to do was go find him. Amid the clamor of subways and crowded bars and neon-lit offices, I was straining to hear the clink of love against my life. Could love in the North be as simple as a family game in the South?

"Keep shining your light," my best friend, Lily, told me over $25 macaroni one Saturday night in the West Village. But looking around at the other tables in the trendy restaurant, it appeared that the whole city was made up of romantic couples and "girls' nights out."

I dated doctors, musicians, vegetarians. One prospective boyfriend explained to me over a dinner of roasted goat how he liked to go jogging in the park. Barefoot.

"Ouch," I thought to myself as I walked home alone, not sure if I was cringing over the thought of a rusty nail or another lukewarm date.

I forced myself to believe that I was in the circle with the thimble, that it was just a matter of time. But as the seasons passed, the circle got larger and larger. I worried that I would run out of time. Or guesses.

One autumn night, I went to a pumpkin carving party at a friend's house in Hell's Kitchen. It started off particularly hellish: I rang the wrong doorbell and stood outside for half an hour. Even then, I was too early and watched uselessly while the hostess heated pigs-in-a-blanket. Three hours later, as I was writing off the evening as another booby trap in my scavenger hunt for love, he appeared.

He was coming from work, late, in a suit and tie. He was six-foot-five, maybe 180 pounds. His nickname was "Lanky." Immediately I liked him: the way he looked at me, the way he asked questions, his energy. You could tell he was awake-smart, look at you across the table and "get it" smart. I guessed by his sweet brown eyes that he'd probably had more relationships with chocolate Labs than New York City girls. And best of all, he was from North Carolina. We only spoke for ten minutes, largely interrupted. But when I went to leave, he jumped off the couch to say goodbye.

I left the party feeling like I'd found the thimble.

After a Wilmington wedding, one in which a hurricane pounded down on our Manhattan guests, Lanky and I moved into a brownstone on the Upper West Side, just a few blocks from my old single-girl apartment. As I walk down Columbus Avenue on my way to work these days, it is easy to remember the gambler I used to be: moving briskly toward the subway in a new dress; looking, wide-eyed, in every direction for my thimble; imagining the cool press of it in my palms so vividly that my open hands ached.

My grandfather had not been steady enough in his last years to circle the table with the thimble saying, "Hold tight to what I give you"; instead, we tiptoed around him. I wish I could lean close to him again. Tell him I found something good, and I am holding on.

*Caroline Hamilton is a writer in New York. She studied creative writing at UNC-Chapel Hill and received her MFA in non-fiction from The New School. Her work has been published in* The New York Times *and* The Charlotte Observer. *She is working on a first novel.*

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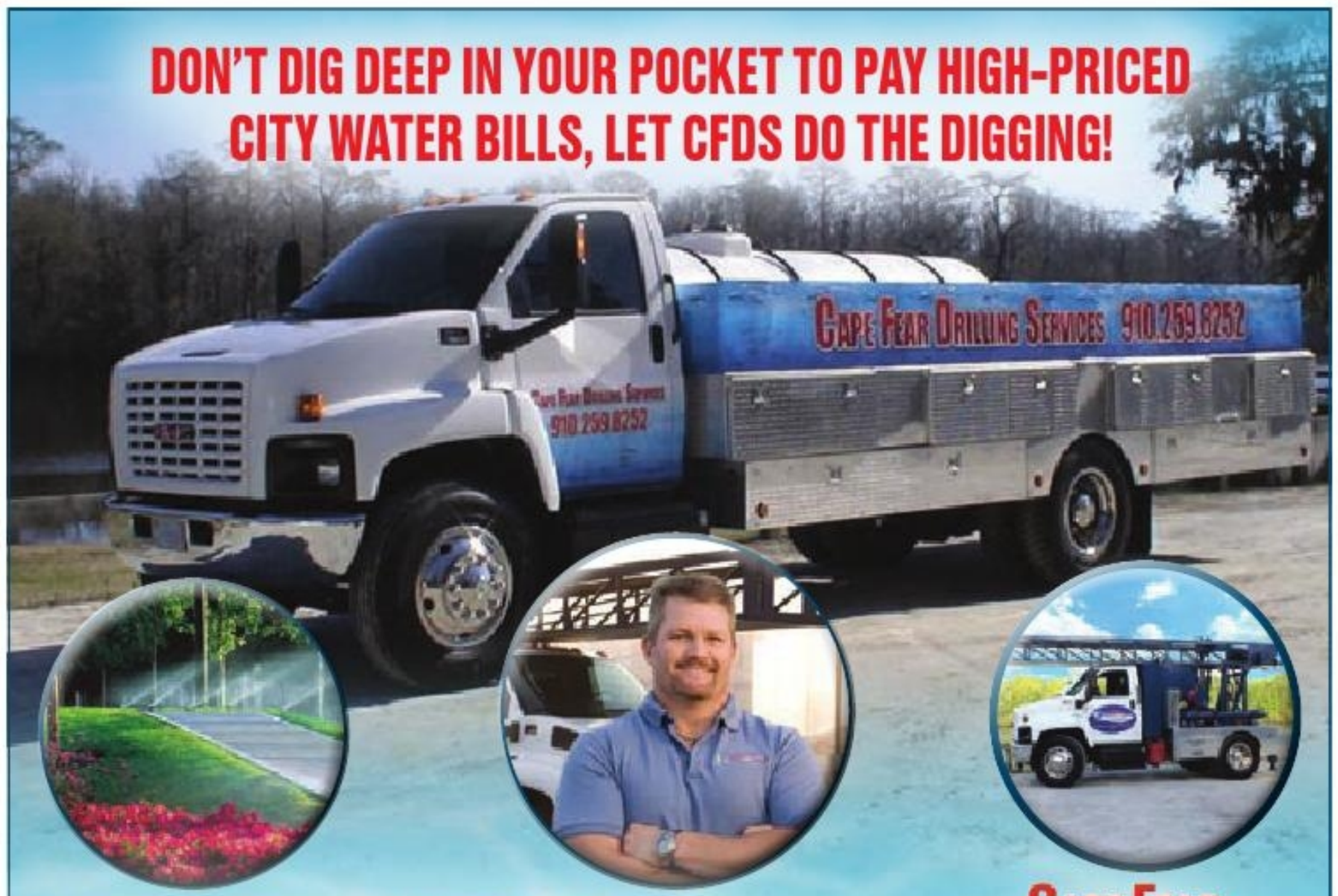


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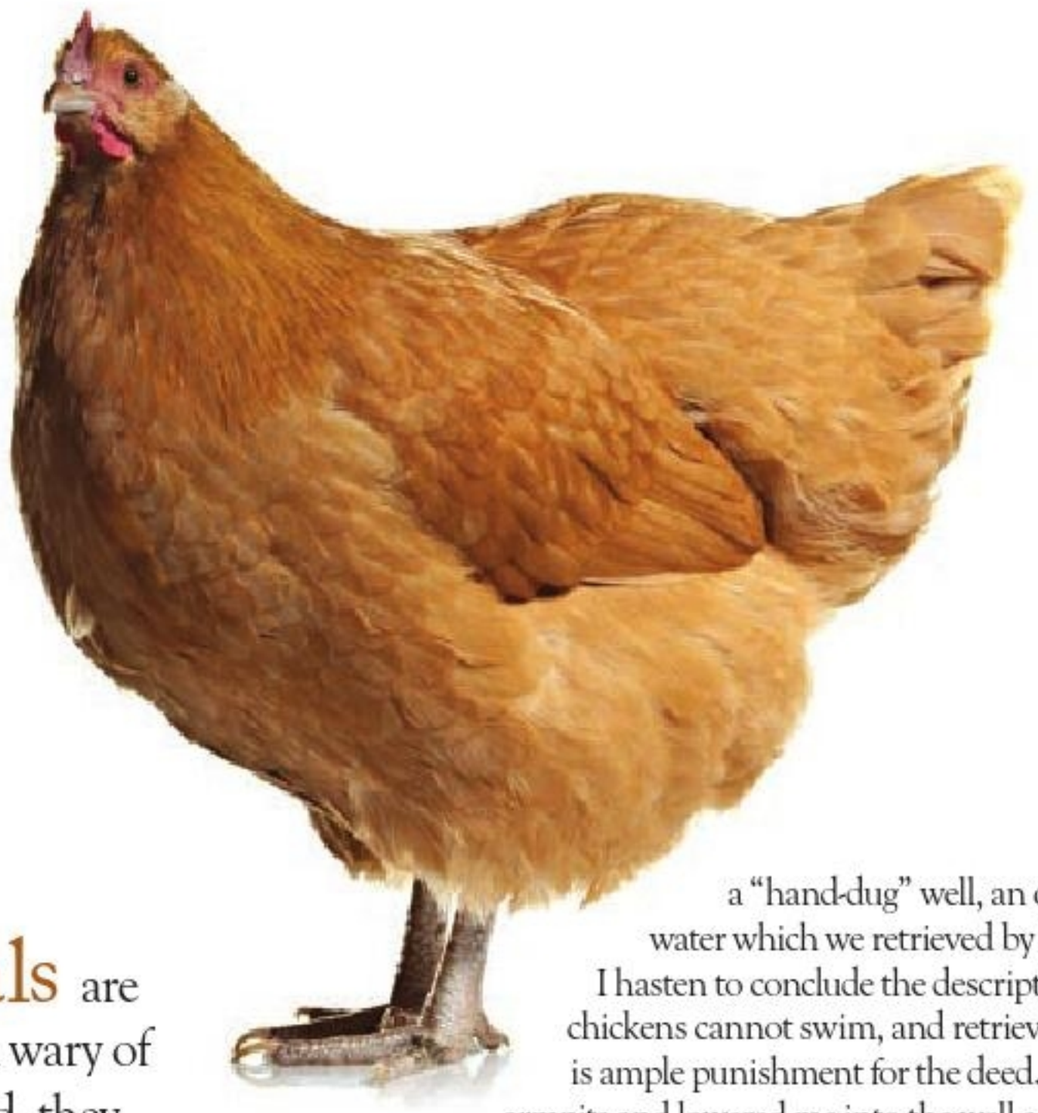
# Animal Curiosity

*To an 8-year-old boy on a farm, chickens and dogs are an irresistible attraction*



By Bill Thompson

**Children and animals** are always a curious combination. Often wary of each other as they become acquainted, they cautiously try to find out what the other is like from a distance. When I was a very young boy, I lived with my grandmother each summer on her farm in Chadbourn. One summer I decided that I wanted to learn more about chickens and to do so I needed a closer inspection than just my observation from the porch. The chickens had full run of the yard — no hen house for those "free-range" birds.

Trying to catch a chicken is a task that requires some stealth and a certain degree of strategic planning. An 8-year-old boy, by nature, is not very stealthy. He blunders and plunges into whatever he is engaged in. So to capture my intended subject of study, I had to build an enclosure. Using tobacco sticks (thin wooden sticks about four feet long used to hang green tobacco in the curing barn), I formed a pen in one of the corners of the barn and placed a handful of corn inside as bait. The corn worked, but as I ran gleefully into the little pen, the ensuing melee scattered the chickens and tobacco sticks. Through sheer luck, I managed to catch one of the chickens.

Upon close inspection I found nothing extraordinary about the chicken — at least nothing that I had not already observed from the porch. What I needed was to study the chicken in a different environment, primarily to determine something unique about them. I had seen ducks swimming in the pond down in the field and wondered if chickens could swim like ducks. To an 8-year-old boy, you see, there is a great similarity between ducks and chickens.

I didn't want to turn the chicken loose in the pond since retrieval would be difficult, so I dropped the flapping fowl down the well. It was what we called a "hand-dug" well, an open hole in the ground that gathered water which we retrieved by lowering a bucket down on a windlass. I hasten to conclude the description of this incident by telling you that chickens cannot swim, and retrieval of a dead, wet chicken from a well is ample punishment for the deed. My uncle attached a rope under my armpits and lowered me into the well and pulled me back up with the drowned chicken. My grandmother did not think that was ample punishment since the well, the sole source of drinking water, was "fouled" and had to be closed for several days. She believed in the old-fashioned corporal punishment, which she administered with reluctant but sufficient authority.

I tell all this as a preamble to a much gentler encounter with animals. That same summer I lived with my grandmother, I became friends with her dog, a big yellow canine of unknown pedigree named Thomas. Thomas was amiable, not afraid of people at all. In fact, he sought out the company of humans. We shared the summer exploring the farm. At night he would sleep beside my bed.

As with the chicken, I was curious about the dog. I watched him chase squirrels, scratch himself, sniff out rats under the barn, bark at strangers who came in the yard and chase me across the fields and pastures. He ate scraps from the dinner table and I fed him some dry dog food about once a week.

I wondered if he would lap up milk like a cat. So I placed a saucer of milk in front of him and he sniffed it, promptly put his foot on the saucer and turned it over. That indicated to me that dogs, at least that one, don't like milk.

However, a few days later my grandmother served ice cream for dessert at Sunday dinner. I sat at the children's table with my cousins. When I was served my ice cream, Thomas put his head in my lap and wagged his tail vigorously. I ate half of the ice cream and gave the other half to Thomas. I loved and still love ice cream. Because there were approximately thirty people to share the gallon of homemade ice cream, my portion was small. But Thomas was my friend and friends share.

I still like dogs better than chickens. Plus, dogs can swim.

*Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.*

# Walking the Walk

*Port City recreation czar Amy Beatty's vision of an ever-growing Greenway system*

By Dana Sachs

Let me start with a confession. When Amy Beatty and I met for lunch at Delphina Dos Cantina downtown, we both traveled there by car. And then we talked about bike riding and walking in Wilmington.

According to Amy, the city's superintendent of recreation and downtown services (and an avid athlete), we're pretty typical. When a community has a new greenway system, as Wilmington has, people use it mostly for recreation, not to get around town. Only after webs of multi-use trails become extensive and well-established, like Raleigh's decades-old 100-mile network, do people begin to use the routes for daily transportation — in other words, not just for the morning jog but also to go to work or meet a friend for lunch.

"We're playing catch-up" with cities like Raleigh, Amy told me, but Wilmington is catching up quickly and, if things go as local officials hope, we'll continue to see steady growth of the trail system in coming years. The $55 million 2014 Transportation Bond initiative comes up for a vote this month and, if passed, it will provide $20 million for new multi-use trails, including ones along South College Road, Kerr Avenue, and Masonboro Sound and Greenville Loop Roads. The two-cent property tax increase that would pay for the bond — which includes many other transportation improvements as well — amounts to, on average, about $40 per year for the owner of a $200,000 home.

Wilmington's greenway system didn't even exist ten years ago. Back in 2006, Gary Shell, then the city's director of parks and recreation, decided that Wilmington needed a network of multi-use trails. The word "greenway" was almost a foreign term back then, and when Shell first approached Mayor Bill Saffo with his idea, Amy told me, "the mayor laughed and said Gary was crazy."

Shell wasn't crazy. As it turned out, he was one of the first to articulate a vision that many local residents also supported and which Mayor Saffo soon recognized as both feasible and good for the community. That year, voters approved a ballot measure for a parks and greenspace bond that included $1 million for a one-mile greenway. Savvy city leaders, including the mayor, used additional federal, state, local and private support to leverage that million into $9 million in funding. They expected to finish the first fifteen-mile phase of the project in 20 to 25 years. Instead, they're scheduled to complete it in eight.

"Now we call Mayor Saffo 'the Bicycle Mayor,'" Amy said, "because he's been so supportive." And, to honor the vision of Shell, who died of cancer in 2011, city leaders named the original greenway the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail. It makes a C-shaped arc west from the Wrightsville Beach drawbridge, through UNCW, south along Independence Boulevard, then east again, ending at James E. L. Wade Park, a sweet little wetland near the intersection

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

of Seventeenth Street and South College Road.

"Gary saw the trail as a spine for a future network of greenways to link parks, schools, commercial destinations and neighborhoods," explained Amy, who oversees the management of the current trail while also planning for future growth. When she and her colleagues assesses trail usage every May and September, they find that it either remains consistent or rises at every location.

Some of the Wilmington greenway's success, Amy said, results from a change in thinking. Before multi-use systems are built, local residents sometimes worry that trails will become "corridors of crime." Once the trails become a reality, however, those concerns diminish and people come to see how greenways enrich the community. In Wilmington, that shift happened quickly, as large property owners — among them UNCW and the Trask, Cameron and MacRae families — granted easements that allowed the city to build trails on their land. In turn, proximity to the greenway system enhances the value of property. "You see more and more people wanting to live in developments that are bike- and walking-friendly," Amy said. New local residential communities promote their proximity to the trail as an asset. Some even offer bike storage facilities.

Now that most of the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail is complete, city and regional leaders are working to expand the greenway system. Some of the plans, like an extension of the trail along Park Avenue, have funding already. Others, Amy said, will be built if November's bond measure passes. Still other trails won't be realized for years but sound magnificent, like the Downtown Greenway, which will follow the old rail bed that crosses under Third Street, continue along Burnt Mill Creek, and then intersect with the Cross-City Trail on Park Avenue.

Is it possible to work up an appetite just by *talking* about walking and riding bicycles? Of course. Amy and I started with a Mexican rendition of that Italian favorite, bruschetta. Delphina Dos's chefs slather slices of bolillo bread (similar to a French baguette) with black bean purée, then melt Chihuahua cheese on top and cover each slice with pico de gallo, spicy chipotle aioli, and a dusting of crumbled cotija cheese. The result is as wholesome as any comfort food, but with a more dramatic personality. "It's unique," Amy said. "Whenever you think of Mexican food, you don't think of this kind of bread. You think of tortillas."

We skipped the tortillas, too, for the Carnitas Verde Salad Bowl, which turned the standard burrito inside-out by arranging the ingredients — succulent fried pork, cheese, two kinds of salsa, cilantro, onions, and rice and beans — in a deep bowl (you can order it as a regular burrito, too). Don't assume that the restaurant has abandoned classic tortillas, however. In fact, Delphina Dos makes its own, which puff up as they cook, becoming light and airy, not at all greasy, and, in our case, a perfect vehicle for grilled tuna tacos. We ended lunch with a plate of churros, tubes of deep-friend pastry coated with cinnamon sugar, filled with caramel, and topped with whipped cream. "It tastes like a holiday," Amy said.

Amy has an 8-year-old son, Jackie, who loves to ride his bike. These days, traffic in their neighborhood remains too dangerous for him to go out alone. His mom is trying make things better for kids in this city. "I would love for people in Wilmington to be able to let their children ride bikes around safely," she told me. "I want my son to have that freedom."

Wilmington is not quite there, Amy Beatty said. Yet.

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Sadly, Delphina Dos closed after our visit. A new restaurant may open there soon, so keep an eye on 5 South Water Street. For more information on Wilmington's 2014 Transportation Bond or the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail, visit www.wilmingtonnc.gov.

*Dana Sachs' latest novel,* The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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# Tree Swallows

*At this time of year, the sky is dancing with these black-masked wonders*

By Susan Campbell

## Perhaps you have seen them:

huge flocks of small birds wheeling over open water or marsh, twisting and turning in deliberate arcs. They are most likely migrant swallows. And at this time of year, most of them are tree swallows. Sometimes numbering in the thousands, they feast on the plethora of late season flying insects. Until the frost pushes them farther south to warmer climes, the skies will be dancing with them.

Tree swallows boast iridescent green backs with crisp white undersides. Young of the year are a dusky gray-brown with pale grayish breast bands and lower parts, but both age classes have a black mask. Their call is a characteristic high pitched liquid chirping which becomes a harsh chatter when alarmed.

Although mainly insectivorous, tree swallows will feed on berries (such as those of wax myrtle) during cold or wet periods in the fall. It is an odd sight: plants covered with fluttering birds, all tugging at tiny fruit. Most commonly they consume insects on the wing, swallowing anything small enough to enter their throat. Although they may pick insects out of the air, they will simply consume whatever may enter their mouth when flying through clouds of small flies, midges and the like. In cool or windy weather, they often feed close to the ground or water surface.

In late afternoon, large numbers of tree swallows descend into thick vegetation to spend the night. In areas devoid of trees or shrubs, they will use marsh grasses as cover. Wind and rain as well as large owls such as great horneds or short-eareds are threats in the darkness.

As cavity nesters, tree swallows historically use holes in snags in or adjacent to water. But with fewer dead trees on the landscape, the birds can be found using nest boxes or other man-made crevices. In fact, where the right sized bird boxes have been erected in wet habitats, tree swallows have moved right in. Only very large bodies of water attract these birds in the warmer months since they need a steady stream of large flying insects while raising their families. Even so, there are more locations boasting breeding pairs in the Piedmont and Coastal sections of the state each spring. Females can occasionally be found using wood duck or purple martin housing when smaller boxes are unavailable.

Farther north, where more tree swallows breed, they may be found on small farm ponds or the shores of large lakes. They are loosely colonial, with a few to several pairs found in close proximity. Brood size is dependent on fold availability with four to six young depending on insect population. In years of especially abundant insects, males may even bond with multiple females (exhibit polygyny), further increasing local tree swallow productivity.

Tree swallows form huge, often combined flocks during fall migration. Barn, cliff and rough-winged swallows may accompany them. In late fall or early winter, you can find a cave swallow or two mixed in with them. If you are scanning a big group of swallows with binoculars, look for a stockier individual with a pale rump patch and throat. Although typically a southwestern species, we now know that some caves do wander north and east, turning up along the Atlantic coastline late each year.

But know that swallows will be with us along the southern coastline for some weeks yet. Even though the nights are getting chillier, as long as the insects are still active around our beaches, marshes and sounds, so too will be the graceful tree swallows.

*Susan would love to hear from you. Send wildlife sightings and photos to susan@ncaves.com or call (910) 949-3207.*

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# Something That Tastes Like Home

*This year, Thanksgiving will bring out the ham in me*

By Virginia Holman

**When I think** of Thanksgiving, I think of Smithfield ham — not what Smithfield is now, the *there are more hogs packed into southeastern North Carolina than there are people in the entire state*, nor the Smithfield of *hold your nose on that long stretch of I-40 with all the hog waste lagoons* as you're headed south between Raleigh and Wrightsville Beach. No, these childhood hams belonged to a simpler time, when Smithfield ham meant not *waterway pollution*, but simply the richest, saltiest, absolute best ham in the world. That is, a ham that exists purely in memory.

It was this ham that I craved each Thanksgiving to the exclusion of any other food. This was before there were deli counters throughout the South where anyone might get a pound or two of Smithfield ham razor-sliced so thin it is rendered more essence than flesh itself, evanescent. Back in the day, if you wanted Smithfield ham, you bought the whole cured leg with the exception of the curly tail, skin and hoof.

The day after children returned home after marauding the suburbs as gypsies and hoboes, the hams were strung from high hooks in the A&P and local hardware stores. There, an aproned man could be summoned to cut it down and tote it on his shoulders to the car, because it weighed fifteen to twenty pounds. The smell that filled the car was opulent, oily, a scent laced with bacon and sulphur, chimney smoke and crisp fall leaves, and a slight funky hit of decay that always cooked away. Heavenly.

It was always a slight disappointment to arrive home and not be able to eat the ham at once. Even worse was to see the ham naked, unwrapped from its stamped burlap bag. A tawny inch-deep layer of hard fat shrouded the meat from shank to hock, and was speckled with a decidedly unappetizing dusty green mold. Some people, my mother said, sawed into the ham just like that. They'd fry the fat with its molded rind, and when the ham was gone, used the bone for navy bean soup, no part left to waste. Our ham, however, received a long overnight soak in the kitchen sink. The next morning it was scraped and scrubbed clean, until it slid from my mother's hands like a soap-slick baby.

As for the rest of the holiday meal, I could do without it. I know, I know, many people love Thanksgiving. Yet each November, I find myself tense about all the food. I've always been bewildered by some of the dishes that

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appeared on the Thanksgiving table during my childhood: sweet potato casserole topped with an impermeable crust of broiled marshmallows, factory farmed frozen turkey rendered so bland if I were blindfolded it would be a challenge to distinguish it from baked pencil eraser, cranberry aspic freshly shucked from the can, small translucent onions staring up from a chafing dish like a hundred eyeballs afloat in a pearlescent sea of cheese. Still, despite such gastronomic terrors, it was at the very least entertaining for my sister and me to debate (after the meal, in secret) which item was the most revolting. It was a regrettable tradition.

Mostly, the meal portion of the holiday flummoxes me because I have never been much of an eater. I'm not picky; that would imply I truly cared about most food beyond needing it as fuel and hoping that it tastes OK. Nor do I actively dislike many foods. It's just that I lack a robust appetite; I rarely crave. When I look in the refrigerator, more often than not I shrug. I dutifully assemble a meal because a colorful, pyramidal meal is something one is expected to do, like flossing, and because my husband would rather not subsist on my preferred diet of protein bars and Diet Coke. At times, I've been fascinated by the many people who live to cook and eat. I'll resolve to get serious and really learn to dine. I'll cruise the restaurant reviews to try to whet my appetite. More often than not, I come away irritated instead of enthusiastic. The language employed by the average food writer often sounds vaguely clinical, and detached descriptors like mouthfeel and toothsome conjure less a pleasurable meal than a trip to a slightly pervy dentist, which, I should clarify, my dentist is not. At least, not to my knowledge.

Anyway, I trace my lack of appetite to my childhood as a skinny, sickly kid — not super sick, but chronically, annoyingly sick. At one point I missed, I'm told, about a half year of elementary school from illness. My first eight years were marked by too many doctor appointments: First there were years of gamma globulin injections in my legs, then hospital stays for surgeries on my ears and throat, then twice-weekly allergy shots, all in the hope of boosting my immunity to the hacking coughs and infections that I eventually, blessedly, mostly "grew out of" by my ninth birthday, just in time for my mother to become irretrievably ill. When I felt lousy as a kid, and she was still more or less well, we would try to find one or two things I'd eat, things that still tasted good to me, and I'd eat those things almost exclusively. Once I was on the mend, I was a wild child tomboy who couldn't be chained to a dining room table. I simply wanted fuel for my next bike ride down the dirt hill. The occasions I was forced to linger over a family meal felt like dull torture.

My poor eating habits have persisted. To this day, I go through phases with foods I like to the near exclusion of anything else: pimento cheese on French bread; soft-boiled eggs; lemony chicken and dumplings with fresh thyme; edamame. I much prefer the savory to the sweet. I like food the same way I like music. I like one song, or one group, fervently, obsessively, for weeks, for months, until the next obsession comes along. (If we were speaking of cereal, one might say I'm a serial cerealist, though one should, of course, resist the use of puns.)

Despite all of this, each year I muddle through the holiday, as many of us do. Or I did. This fall, my tension over Thanksgiving has blossomed into abject fear. This year, I am in charge of my first entire Thanksgiving dinner. I left home at 17, and I have somehow successfully dodged this adult obligation, alternately leaving it to my husband's late mother or my father's wife or my unflappable Swedish sister-in-law. My sole contribution to their meals was always the same: swoop in at the last minute with some wine and flowers, and a "can I help with anything?" offer when clearly the real anything had been done days before, while I was hundreds of miles away, burrowing the last of the linty candy corn out of my son's Halloween pillowcase.

Now that I'm in charge this Thanksgiving, I find I want only one thing, the hams my mother made when I was young. Yet those hams, and my mother, are gone. At first I wanted to call off the whole holiday, and do something utterly un-festive, like wear a hairshirt while grading student papers. Instead, I'll swallow hard, hold fast to my memories, and try to make something splendid for those who gather at my table. I'll find a ham, a good country ham, raised and cured on a homestead farm, a ham that sweated deep through July, and tastes of the land where it was raised. I'll buy it from my friends Max and April Sussman at The Veggie Wagon in Carolina Beach. Max will offer to carry it for me, because that's how he is. If you want a smaller brisket than the one in the store freezer, he'll drive three miles home to give you the one he's squirreled away. I'll carry the ham myself, wash it and scrub it till the fat glistens, and then I'll carefully score it, exactly like my mother did, until it's covered in precise diamonds. I'll place a clove in the center of each diamond, a fragrant black star. Then I will put it in the oven and hope that I can serve my gathered family something that tastes like home.

*Author Virginia Holman teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington and occasionally guides with Kayak Carolina.*

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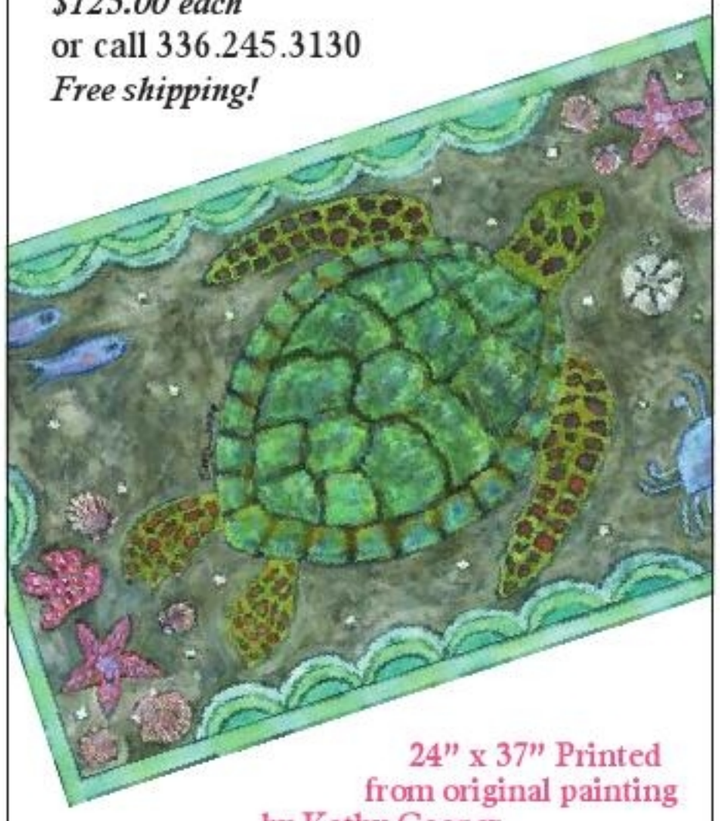

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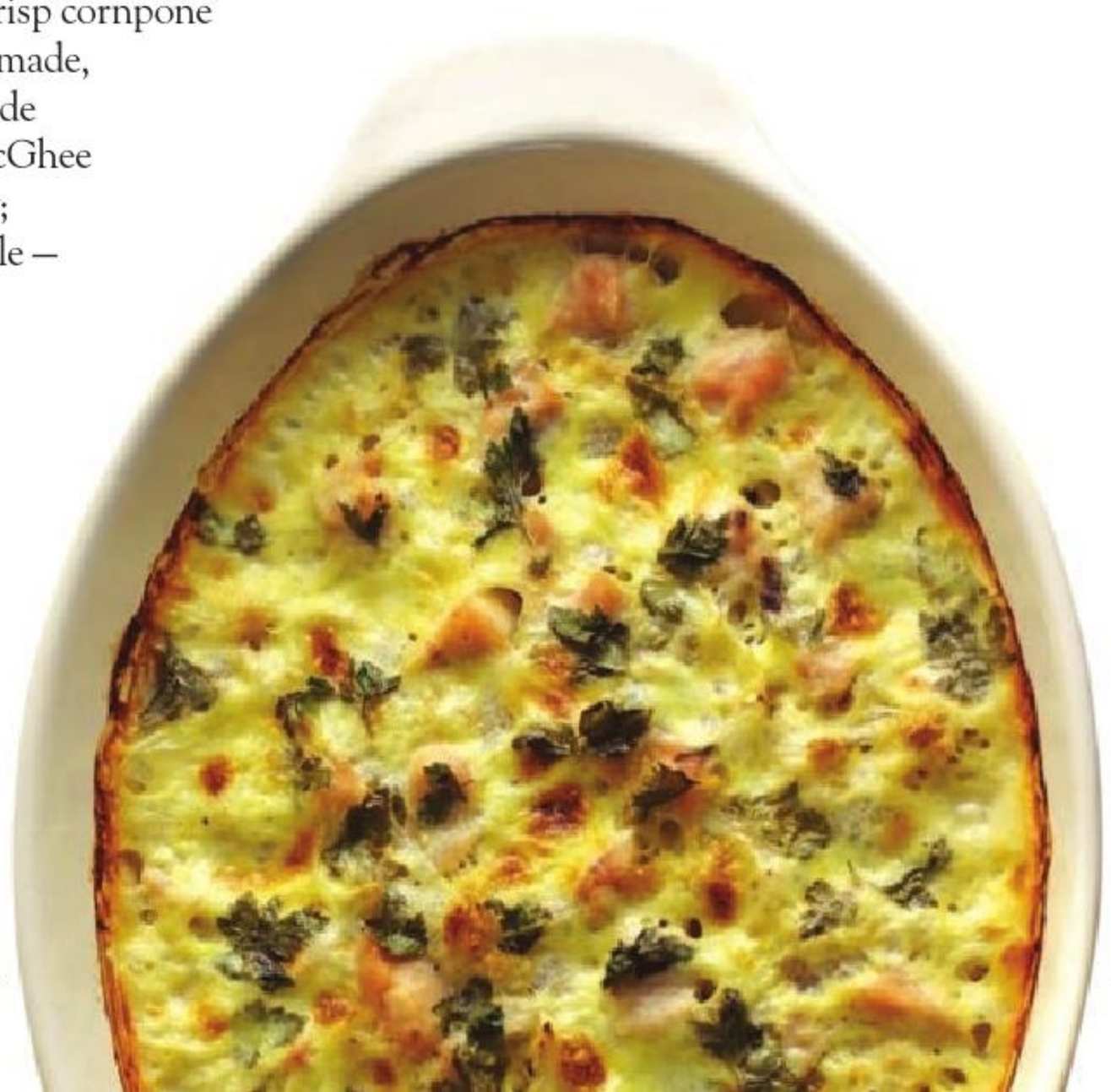
Aunt Matilda so tediously made,
And the zucchini marmalade
Brought by crazy Uncle McGhee
He includes democratically;
But his blessing is not whole —
It omits the casserole.

The fumes it breathes are strong enough
To set the smoke detectors off;
The radon gauge screams into red,
The Geiger counters go stark mad.
The laws of physics confirm our fears —
A half-life of four billion years:
For mankind's future we *must* control
Aunt Lavinia's casserole;

Or else it's what our family
Will bequeath to all eternity:
An angry, evil, black morass
Slowly approaching critical mass.
Ages will roll, constellations change,
Gemini into Virgo range,
And then the system from pole to pole
Will collapse into the casserole.

*– Fred Chappell*
*from* Family Gathering, *Louisiana State University Press, 2000*



# Food *for the Soul*

*No matter where we come from, certain foods touch something deep within the soul – sacred dishes that delight the tongue and stir the heart, especially at the holidays*

Photographs by James Stefiuk

## Scungilli Salad

1 pound shrimp (peeled and deveined)
1 pound scungilli (whelk or sea snails)
1 pound calamari
1 small octopus
5 garlic cloves, minced
5–6 celery stalks, chopped
Juice from 4 lemons (or more to taste)
Lemon zest
Olive oil
Salt and pepper
1/4 cup chopped Italian parsley (to taste)

Bring a large stockpot of salted water to boil. Add the shrimp, scungilli and calamari. Hold octopus by one leg and dunk it in the water five to seven times, rotating it so the leg you're holding is also immersed in the boiling water; once you've dunked the octopus, drop it in.

When the seafood is cooked – the shrimp turning opaque and pink, the octopus taking on a shade of purple – remove it from the water and place it in an ice bath to stop the cooking process. Place in a bowl or on a tray in the refrigerator to cool.

When you're ready to serve, toss the cold seafood in olive oil and lemon juice, adding in the garlic and celery. Salt and pepper to taste, top with chopped parsley, and serve with crusty bread.

## Feast of the Seven Fishes

By Jason Frye

In many households, Christmas Eve is a time to come together, feast, and celebrate. For Italians, especially southern Italians, *La Vigilia* is time for the *Festa dei Sette Pesci*, Feast of the Seven Fishes.

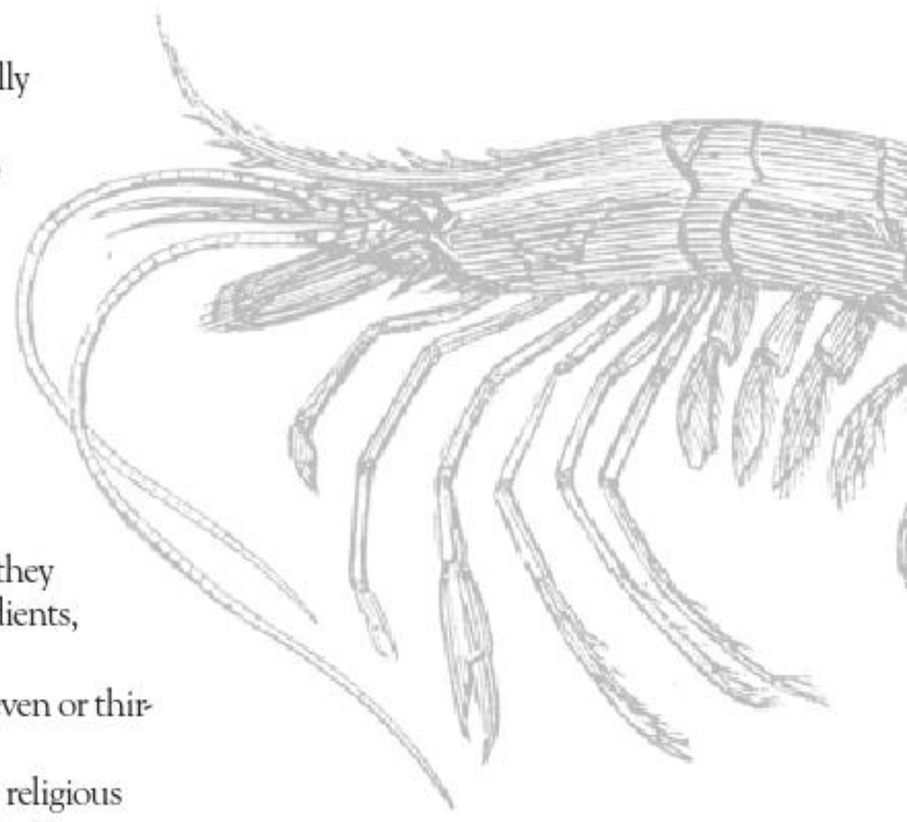
During the Feast of the Seven Fishes, at least seven courses of seafood are served, family-style, to commemorate the *Vigilia di Natale*, the wait for the midnight birth of Jesus. In keeping with other Roman Catholic traditions (like Lent, in which the faithful abstain from meat on Fridays), the devout practice abstinence from meat and dairy products on this feast day, so in absence of beef, veal and pork cooked in butter or with creamy sauces, they turn to the sea, preparing instead fish, shrimp, mussels, crab and octopus.

"My family always served *baccalà* – salted cod – to start the Feast of the Seven Fishes," says Maria Accattato, co-owner of Terrazzo Trattoria. "We'd follow that up with six more courses. Eel, fresh anchovies, linguine with clams, and, of course, the *scungilli* salad."

Scungilli are better known here as whelk, a giant marine snail, almost the Italian equivalent of escargot, and they lend this cold seafood salad a meaty texture that balances out against the textures and flavors of the other ingredients, which, in Accattato's case, are shrimp, calamari and octopus.

"For us, the Feast of the Seven Fishes was seven courses, though I do know other families who did nine or eleven or thirteen courses," she says.

These other families didn't just have a hunger for seafood; the number of courses, from seven to thirteen, has religious significance. The number seven is mentioned in the Bible more than 700 times, there are seven Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, and seven hills surrounding Rome. As for thirteen courses, they represent Jesus and his twelve Apostles, though some leave off Jesus and Judas, making eleven courses.



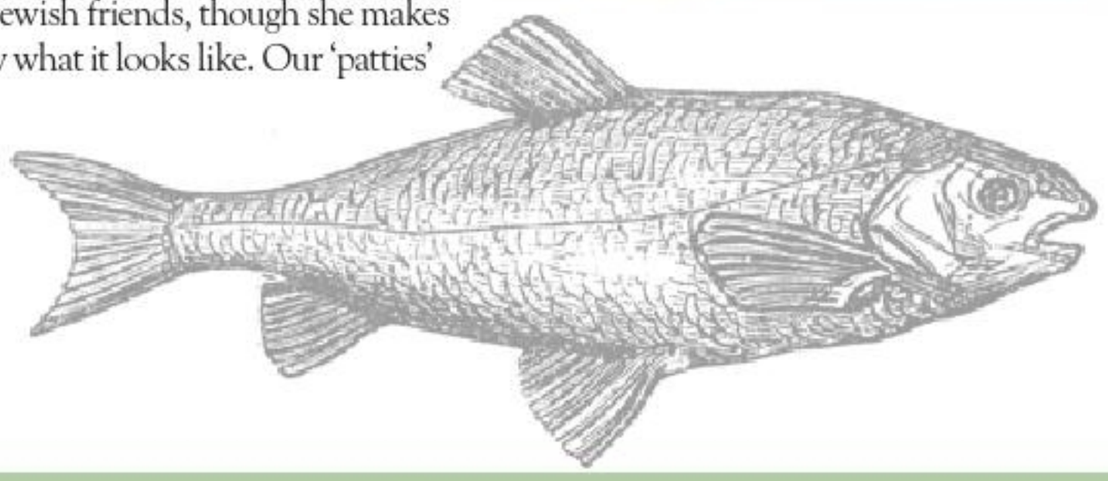
# A Dish from the Old Country

By Dana Sachs

Most Ashkenazi Jews, whose ancestors came from Europe, have tasted gefilte fish, the boiled patties of ground-up carp, pike or buffalo fish that show up on the Passover Seder table every spring. If you ask one of them for a recipe, though, they're likely to say, "Buy a jar of the Manischewitz brand, pull the fish out of the jar, put it on a plate." Not Sheri Malman, who makes a recipe she inherited from her grandmother, "Bo," from scratch.

As a kid, Sheri was a picky eater who refused to try gefilte fish, and she only became more adventurous as an adult. After Bo died, and left Sheri some "weird" kitchen utensils, like a circular chopping knife, Sheri decided to cook some of the old recipes. "Gefilte fish seemed like the most daunting one," she says, so she tried it, following the instructions exactly. She bought the pike and buffalo fish whole and had the fishmonger filet and grind the meat for her. Then, at home, she made a broth from the leftover heads and tails (traditional gefilte fish evolved as peasant food, which uses everything) and hand chopped and mixed all the ingredients. The results were not exactly appetizing. "It was smelly," Sheri remembers, and the broth, which took all day to make, was "really foamy and gross."

She began experimenting after that, adapting her grandmother's recipe into a dish that she and her family and friends would want to eat. These days, Sheri goes to Motts Channel Seafood and buys "a nice, meaty white fish that's fresh and pretty" and, instead of making that unappealing fish stock, she relies on organic vegetable broth, either bought or homemade. The result, she says, is a dish so satisfying that it has passed the two major Gefilte Fish Challenges: Will a kid eat it? Yes. Will a non-Jew eat it? Absolutely. Sheri has even given the recipe to non-Jewish friends, though she makes sure to clarify one small point: "We Jews have all had it, so we know what it looks like. Our 'patties' are not shaped like hamburgers. It's basically a fish meatball in the shape of a football."



And Sheri also points out that, even though her gefilte fish is more appealing than Bo's, it's still the original handed-down recipe. "The secret to everything, I learned from my grandmother, is parsnips. It's one of those weird things that you don't notice, but it's essential."

## Not My Bubbe's Gefilte Fish

Traditional gefilte recipes usually call for buffalo, carp and pike. Tilapia and salmon are good substitutes if fresh-from-the-ocean fish is unavailable. A particularly good combination of fresh fish local to Wilmington is wahoo, sheepshead and grouper, (1 pound wahoo to 2 pounds each of the other two).

Makes about 5 dozen small patties. Serves 30.

This recipe is easily halved or quartered.

4 pounds grouper
1 pound salmon
6–8 medium carrots, roughly diced
2 carrots shaved or sliced for serving
4 small onions, roughly diced
1 parsnip, roughly diced
lettuce leaves for serving
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1–2 cups matzo meal
pepper-to-taste

Enough vegetable broth or water to cover patties (about 64 ounces)

Special equipment: food processor; large soup pot

Wash fish. Remove any stray bones, scales or skin. Cut into small, 1–2-ounce chunks. In batches (as many as 4, depending on the size of food processor) add, with carrots, onions, parsnips, eggs, to bowl of food processor. Pulse until mixture resembles ground meat. Add matzo meal until consistency resembles pre-cooked meatloaf. Contents of bowl will pull from the sides and yet not be crumbly. Transfer contents to large bowl. Repeat until each batch complete.*

Bring half the cooking liquid (stock will add another dimension of flavor) to a boil. Take approximately 2 tablespoons of the mixture and form, by hand, into a rounded-edged football-like patty (versus flat, like a hamburger). Slip into soup pot, in batches if necessary, leaving enough room for the patties to gently bounce. Cover with remaining stock or water. Simmer until patties appear opaque like cooked fish and float to the top. If necessary, skim any foam from top of boil. Cool on wire rack. Store in refrigerator in a tightly covered container, no more than three days.

Serve atop lettuce, topped with carrot curls or slices and with either prepared or fresh horseradish (see below).

*If you don't mind getting messy, process only the vegetables and fish, and mix in, by hand, the eggs, matzo meal, and pepper to taste.

## Fresh Pink Horseradish

(not for the feint of taste buds)

1 horseradish root, roughly sliced/chopped
1 red beet, roasted, diced

Combine horseradish and beet together in food processor. Pulse until mixture is melded and finely ground. REMOVE LID AT ARM'S LENGTH. Horseradish, especially fresh ground, is very powerful. Be mindful of sensitive eyes.

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# True South

By Jason Frye

On New Year's Day across the South, you'll find people enjoying some variation on black-eyed peas and collard greens. The dish is simple, but quite flavorful, and it's one that transcends class and birth. Households rich and poor, Southern-born and Southern-by-choice, will serve this traditional dish to start off the New Year.

"I always knew the collards to represent money, and the black-eyed peas to represent luck," says James Doss, chef-owner of Pembroke's and Rx. "The ham, well, I guess it was in there because it tastes good."

Opinions vary on the roots of the dish and why the foods symbolize what they do. It's easy to figure out the collards — cut into wide strips, they resemble money, so, the thinking goes, if you eat lots of collards, you'll have lots of money coming your way. But what about the peas?

Black-eyed peas have been considered good luck for 1,500 years or more, originating as a *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year) dish and recorded in the Talmud as such. How this came to the South is up in the air, though a devout Jewish sect did settle in the Georgia colony, so the practice could have originated with them.

Another thought is that the black-eyed peas, a simple food, represent humility, and if you're humble to start off the year, good things will come your way. Yet another thought is that, dried, they resemble coins. Or because they expand when you cook them, they symbolize expanding wealth.

Often you'll see this meal served with cornbread, another Southern staple, giving rise to the phrase "Peas for pennies, greens for dollars, and cornbread for gold." Whatever the case, dig up your grandmother's cornbread recipe (or ask a Southern friend for her grannie's recipe) and cook up a little New Year's luck.

## Black-Eyed Peas

4 strips hardwood smoked bacon
1 onion, diced small
2 cloves garlic, minced
12 oz. beer
4 cups chicken stock
2 cups black-eyed peas, soaked overnight and drained

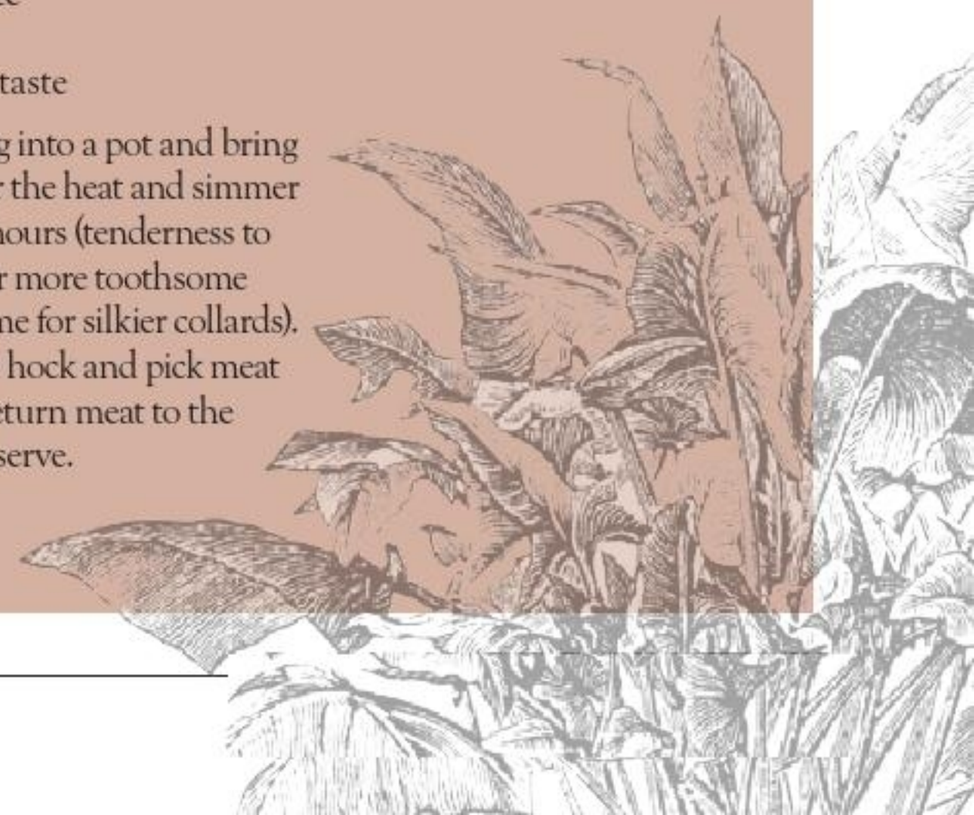
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 bay leaf
6 sprigs thyme
Hot sauce to taste
Sea salt to taste
Black pepper to taste

In a 2-quart pot, render the bacon until crisp, remove from pot. In bacon grease, cook onions until soft, add garlic and cook a moment more. Deglaze the pot with beer. Add bacon, black-eyed peas, chicken stock, vinegar, bay leaf, and thyme. Bring pot to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer until peas are tender, 1–2 hours. As you cook, check for tenderness, adding stock as needed. Season with salt, pepper, and hot sauce; serve.

## Collards

2 heads collards, washed, tough stems removed, cut into wide strips
1 smoked ham hock
2 onions, julienned
4 quarts chicken or pork stock
12 oz. beer
1 cup apple cider vinegar
1 cup light brown sugar or sorghum
1 tablespoon red chili flakes
Hot sauce to taste
Sea salt to taste
Black pepper to taste

Put everything into a pot and bring it to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer 45 minutes to 2 hours (tenderness to taste, less time for more toothsome collards, more time for silkier collards). Remove the ham hock and pick meat from the bone; return meat to the pot. Season and serve.



# The Flavors of Tet and a Saigon Childhood

By Dana Sachs

Lan Washington vividly remembers celebrating Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, during her childhood in South Vietnam. On New Year's Eve, the family came together for a feast. The next day, they dressed in new clothes and went to visit neighbors to wish them a happy new year, chatting and snacking on nuts, candied fruits and other sweets. Later, everyone gathered at the central market to gamble and watch the traditional lion dances, firecrackers popping all around them. Children received *lì xì*, little red envelopes containing money meant to bring them luck in the coming year.

The only dishes that are absolutely necessary for a Vietnamese New Year's feast are *Bánh Chng* and *Bánh Tét*, rice cakes so essential that there's even a folktale explaining their importance to Vietnamese culture. Aside from the rice cakes, though, every family and region has its culinary traditions. In the part of South Vietnam where Lan grew up, people ate pork stew made with coconut juice, a dish of pickled vegetables, and steamed rice. "Back in Saigon, everybody has to have one pot of that pork stew," she says.

Even though she's lived in Wilmington for decades, Lan still makes her holiday meal every year, often with the help of her dear friend Mary Eaches (pictured), and the pork stew is a central part of it. "It's like a beef stew, but with pork," she explains. For Lan's version, meat — usually pork shoulder, but some people use the fattier belly — cooks slowly in a savory broth. Coconut juice, the clear water of the fruit, gives the recipe a distinctive taste and richness. And the dish includes one ingredient that you're unlikely to find in any American stew, hard-boiled eggs. The eggs boil separately, then they're peeled and added to the pork as it cooks. Slowly, the boiled eggs absorb the flavors.

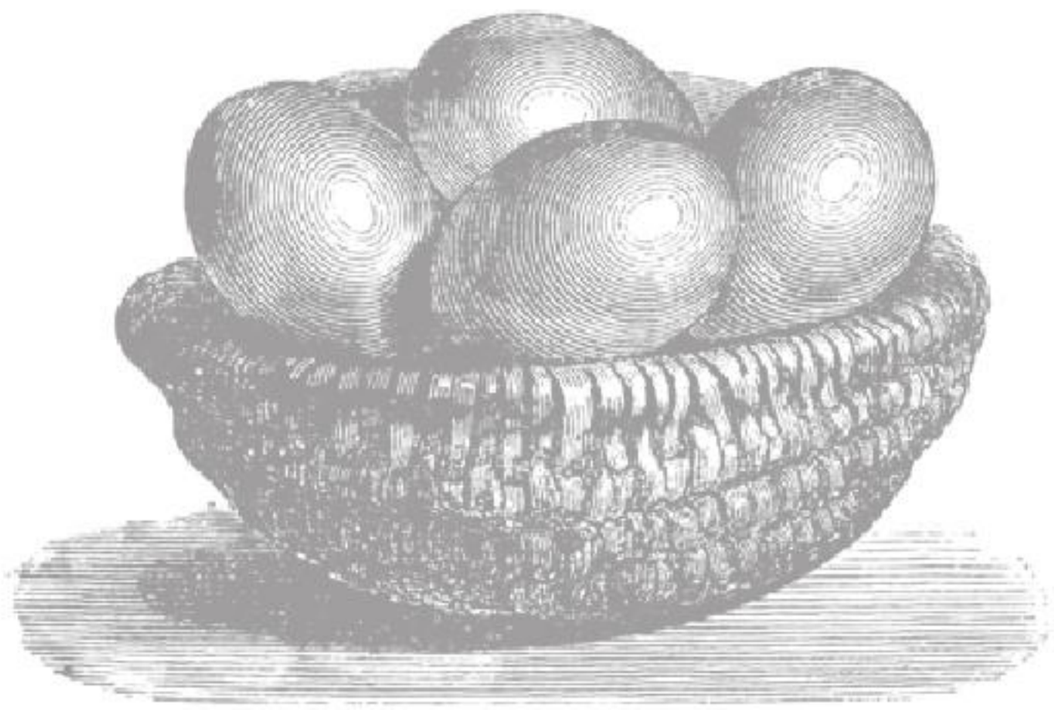
Lan does not say that her holiday meal is particularly elaborate, certainly not by Thanksgiving standards. However, "if you don't cook those things, it doesn't seem like New Year." Though she knows how to make rice cakes, doing so requires an hours-long process — when was the last time you made a fruitcake? — and these days she mostly buys them. By making pork stew and pickled vegetables, however, she recreates the flavors of Tet right in her North Carolina kitchen.

Vietnamese holidays follow the lunar calendar, and in 2015 Tet begins at midnight on February 18. With Mary's help, Lan will be making her pork stew, as always, and serving it to three generations of her family. "It looks real pretty when you put it in a bowl, with the eggs," she says, though she admits that her children and grandchildren have other things on their minds during the holiday. "Mostly, the kids just eat candy." And her son and daughter, who now have children of their own? "They don't eat much pork," she'll tell you. "But they still ask me for the red envelope, for good luck."

## Pork and Egg Stew

2 pounds pork belly or pork shoulder
1 tablespoon oil
6 hard-boiled eggs (shelled)
3 cups water
2 cups coconut water
1/2 teaspoon thick soy sauce
2 tablespoon fish sauce
2 tablespoon sugar
2 tablespoon salt

Cut pork in 2-inch pieces, heat oil, then stir-fry the meat until fragrant. Add eggs, water, coconut water, thick soy sauce, fish sauce, salt and sugar. Bring to boil. Cover and cook over medium heat for 1 hour or until meat is tender.



# A Woman's Place

*Wilmington's growing reputation as an urban food destination owes much of its success to creative females in the kitchen*

By Jason Frye • Photograph by Ned Leary

*Left to right: Rebeca Alvarado Paredes, Erin Wiley and Tori Layman*

Think of your first culinary memory. Not the first forkful that wowed you or the first bite that opened your eyes, but that first dish you cooked. What was it? Who helped you cook it? Where were you?

I have two: pinto beans and cornbread. Both I cooked in the same kitchen with Granny Madeline. The beans we soaked overnight, then drained, rinsed and set to simmer in a stockpot with water, onion and a little fatback. The cornbread batter we mixed in a white ceramic bowl. It had a crack on one side, a stenciled flower on the other. I can see the bright yellow cornmeal, smell the tang of buttermilk, and recall the dense, sticky texture of the batter before we dropped it into a hot-from-the-oven cast iron skillet.

My first culinary memory is about family and featured prominently Granny Madeline, a woman who didn't know how to make cinnamon toast, but could pull together a simple country meal seemingly without effort, cooking everything from squirrel to wild greens to groundhog with a preternatural ease. Given that most of our early memories are of a similar nature — cooking alongside our mothers or grandmothers — it's surprising that there are so few women in the kitchens of Wilmington's restaurants. My grandfather, benefactor of countless bowls of beans and wedges of that deliciously dry cornbread, would've said, "A woman's place is in the kitchen." So, where are they?

"I don't necessarily think that it's true," says Tori Layman, pastry chef at Pembroke's Restaurant. "A woman's place is in the kitchen? No, it's not a place for everyone. But my place is in the kitchen. I'm just at home there."

Chef Layman, who also makes pastries for Pembroke's sister restaurant, Rx, casually wipes flour from her hands; somehow there's not a smudge of it on her face or so much as a speck of it on her glasses. Beside her, sous chef Erin Wiley takes deep drinks from a glass of ice water. It's blissfully cool at the bar at Pembroke's, unlike the kitchen, which feels 110 degrees or more when you're up against the cooktop or the wood-fired rotisserie.

"It's been my place for almost twenty years, so being in the kitchen is comforting in a lot of ways," Layman says.

"You grow close in a kitchen, and we spend fifty, sixty hours a week, shoulder to shoulder in there. We really are like family," adds Wiley.

"We bicker like family, we argue like family, we love like family. We even defend each other like family. You can't talk about him like that, he's my brother," says Layman, her voice rising and her Long Island accent showing a bit at the edges.

Any work environment pulls people close, but kitchens — collaborative and creative, with success depending on well-orchestrated, well-executed techniques performed by a team of people — are perhaps the most magnetic of places.

It was the collaborative and creative aspects of the kitchen that called Manna's pastry chef, Rebeca Alvarado Paredes, into the kitchen.

"I've always loved cooking and food, and since I've been cooking professionally, that passion has grown deeper. I really enjoy the idea of creating the perfect meal from start to finish. The kitchen drew me in because it allowed me to express myself creatively and surround myself with great food."

Chef Paredes' food is indeed creative. Her imagination flies when it's time to create something new. Sure, you'll find delicate curls of chocolate and the occasional piece of spun sugar, but one of her masterpieces is the Dessert Happy Meal: churro "fries" with raspberry ketchup; a panna cotta "burger" with crème brûlée mayo, mint "lettuce," and a little strawberry "tomato," served with a tiny blueberry milkshake.

Part of what Paredes loves about pastry is the precision involved in creating the perfect dessert, one "that is not only well-balanced in flavor and complexity but also aesthetically appealing." Take that Dessert Happy Meal. It looks like a Happy Meal, except you actually want to eat it.

Is creativity enough to earn the respect of male coworkers? I know about the locker room mentality that can take over a group of guys, especially young, brash guys who feel like they have a little something to prove. The cursing, the aggression, the dirty jokes, and the name calling can all get out of hand, but the way many men of this age talk about women goes a step too far (if you're lucky, more often a dozen paces too far). So how do these women contend with that?

"Like I said, we're a family at Pembroke's and Rx, so we don't deal with it as much," says Layman. "Dirty jokes? Yeah, I hear them and sometimes they're funny, but other times I'm around the corner and it's like they forget I'm here and the locker room talk slowly starts to increase. As soon as they see me, though, it stops. We're family. Would you talk to your sister like that? No, so they don't talk to me like that."

"I see it a little more than [chef Layman]," Wiley says. "I'm on the line with them and it does get a little macho at times, but it's all bravado. Many of the guys here, though, are young and green, so we're able to teach them about being professionals and handling themselves the right way."

"Plus, we're in an open kitchen, so that tones down some of the antics — the cursing, the goofing off, the arguments that happen in other kitchens," Layman says.

Wiley points to a scar on her arm. It's one of many that crisscross her arms and hands. Layman traces a burn on the back of her wrist. "That's one thing that erases the line separating the sexes in the kitchen," Wiley says.

The scars and burns say to the men, we're doing the same job as you. We're getting burned by the same pans, the same flames as you. We're getting cuts and stitches like you. We have the same calluses and broken fingers. We are a team.

"It's not about the talk, it's about the work," Wiley continues.

North Carolina's reputation as a food destination has been on a steady rise for the last ten years or so, driven in part by some fabulous females in kitchens across the state. Their food is of the highest quality and their reputations widely known. Katie Button of Asheville's Cúrate; Angela Reusing of Chapel Hill's Lantern; Ashley Van Camp of Ashten's of Southern Pines; Kim Floresca of One Restaurant in Chapel Hill; Ashley Christensen of Poole's Diner, Chuck's, and Beasley's Chicken and Honey in Raleigh; and Chef-of-the-moment Vivian Howard of Kinston's Chef and the Farmer and the PBS series *A Chef's Life*. Each of these women have noteworthy restaurants, some with James Beard Awards, others with Beard nominations, but every one deserving of a visit.

The same goes for our Wilmington women. Though they work on a smaller stage, they are part of the reason more people are thinking of good food when they think of Wilmington. CAM Cafe's Jess Cabo, Osteria Cicchetti's Chelsea Tull, Vittles food truck's Kirsten Mitchell, Rebeca Alvarado Paredes, Tori Layman and Erin Wiley are all helping push our local fine dining scene forward.

"Quality food is the only thing that matters," Paredes says. "I don't believe I need to be more aggressive to achieve respect in the kitchen; the food I make will garner that respect. When it comes down to it, whether you're a male or female, we simply love cooking and we're working toward a common goal, men and women bringing equally useful qualities and skills to the table."

# From the Shelf

NON-FICTION BY LAVONNE J. ADAMS

Her mother discovered the rogue library book beneath Deborah's pillow. Our friend Holly had flagged the most lascivious passages before passing the book to Kathy, then to me, and finally to Deborah. I wonder if the bookmarks were still there, if a bland curiosity nudged Deborah's mother toward reading those particularly graphic paragraphs, which then fueled her anger. By today's standards, the book would have seemed quite tame, even though it was subtitled in elaborate script, *The Tale of a Bewitching Harlot*. But Deborah's mother, who was mad with a capital M at the level of depravity to which her seventh-grade daughter had been exposed, phoned the school's principal to complain. How could this obviously adult book have found its way into her daughter's guileless hands?

With the exception of Deborah, who had acquired some sort of whistle-blower's immunity, we were sent to the office of the elementary school's principal, whose shiny bluish-gray hair was a beacon of respectability. Prior to that day, she was someone I saw only at a distance as she welcomed parents to school events, as she walked daily through the lunchroom like a benevolent queen. At first, I thought that we were being singled out for some honor — all of us studious and quiet in class — until I saw the librarian standing to the left of the principal's desk, her face red and her eyes narrowed and wary. She looked as if language were a weapon, and we were about to become her sparring partners.

Earlier in the school year, I had joined the newly minted library club founded by that librarian — an attractive middle-aged woman with vivid copper hair whose name I don't remember. We loved her in the way that all students love the music and art teachers, those who provide interesting breaks in routine that rarely include textbooks or tests. As club members, when our class filed into the library each week, we were permitted to re-shelve books, to stamp due dates on slips of paper affixed to each book's back cover. We could even skip recess on days when we didn't want to face the glare of the southern sun, volunteering for library tasks instead.

We were trusted. Perhaps that's why the librarian was so angry.

The book in question was lying on the principal's desk. The librarian pointed to its title, as if those words should have been a warning. And perhaps that assumption would have been accurate if we hadn't been so naïve, if any of us had understood the term "harlot." The artwork on the front cover — a carriage, a man tipping his hat, a woman in a long summery dress and bonnet — bespoke a "period romance," perhaps Edwardian or Georgian. Nothing alarming. And I could swear to the fact that Holly had pulled the book from the young adult section. Yet this was a decade when the word of a seventh-grader, even one who had never been in trouble, wouldn't have been taken seriously.

At the time, there were seventy-six public libraries in the state of Virginia. The city of Norfolk boasted Kirn Memorial Library with its six neighborhood branches scattered like satellites. Kirn was located downtown, a modern building of grey glass and granite. When research projects required resources more sophisticated than our smaller local branch could provide, my mother drove me and my siblings past the *Virginian-Pilot — Ledger-Star* newspaper building, past the eighteenth-century church with the cannonball imbedded in its side, past the sedate columns of the Douglas MacArthur Memorial. I've always considered libraries sacred, and pulling into the downtown parking lot as the late afternoon sun cast its long shadows filled me with the same vague anticipation as entering a dim sanctuary on a Sunday morning.

The Larchmont branch of the Norfolk Public Library system was certainly more cozy. Founded in 1924, it was a small annex attached to the Elementary School, and functioned as the school's library as well. Children's books filled the shelves on the left-hand side of the room, adult books filled the right-hand side. Reference books lined the back wall, faced tables and chairs and a large globe that we loved to spin as we walked past. The young adult section consisted of several bookcases, and only seventh graders were permitted to browse those shelves. It was a rite of passage; the final year in elementary school had few such perks.

We were restricted from walking through the adult section; those books were not to be touched. In a childhood that often seemed disconcertingly precarious, that library was a place where I felt safe, the books I checked out held small pieces of alternate lives: *Miss Osborn the Mop, The Good American Witch*, and later, *A Wrinkle in Time, The Diary of Anne Frank*.

As an adult, I understand that the librarian must have received a severe reprimand for what was probably an accidental shelving of a book in the wrong section, perhaps by one of the librarians at the end of a particularly grueling day, or by a careless member of the library club. I doubt that any malice was intended. But as a result, Holly, Kathy, and I were dismissed from the club. As further punishment, we were prohibited from attending a concert by the Norfolk Symphony, an annual event for public school students. Our parents were called, and it was understood that they would mete out further punishment. Since my mother sometimes had a rather wicked temper, I was anxious over what kind of reception I would receive when I arrived home that afternoon. My mother must have been listening for me, because as soon as I closed the front door, she came downstairs. She paused to look me in the eye, then reached for a very large book on the shelves behind us. She handed it to me, saying, "For every bad book you read, you have to read at least one good book." She turned and went back upstairs, never mentioning the matter again.

That book was *The Robe*, by Lloyd Douglas, the story of a soldier who gambled with his peers at the scene of the crucifixion, winning the robe of Jesus. The book took me about a week to read, its heft a physical reminder of my social transgression. But the book itself was so engaging that the invisible label, "punishment," quickly disappeared: I awakened early and went to bed late, anxious to discover how the story would unfold.

Ultimately, any anguish I felt over the incident with the library book had little to do with the illicit material's titillation; in fact, that novel was rather poorly written. Not much of a plot. Still, when I recollect the incident, I can't help but ponder the dynamics of power, and how authority was wielded by each of those adult "players."

And I still remember the quiet hours in the classroom after my classmates filed onto buses that were driven to the Norfolk Arena where the symphony later played. My teacher, Mrs. Partrea — a lover of both literature and music — relinquished her opportunity to hear classical music in order to supervise us. A model of compassion, she did so without complaint. Unperturbed, she sat at her desk humming as she graded papers, while we — her less-than-perfect students — cleaned the blackboards, finished our homework, and read.

*Lavonne J. Adams, the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet for Eastern North Carolina, teaches at UNCW. She is the author of* Through the Glorieta Pass *and two award-winning chapbooks.*

# The House Next Door

*After tragedy struck, designer Margo Davy and her two boys found home – and a supportive community of friends – right in the neighborhood*

By Anne Barnhill · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

In 2005, Margo Davy, along with her husband, Ralph (aka Rip), and their two sons, Will and Brooks, moved to Landfall, the 2,200-acre gated development nestled near the Intracoastal Waterway. They relocated their family to Wilmington from New York, where Rip had worked in the insurance industry, then changed careers to real estate development. This new direction led to a job in North Carolina.

"North Carolina? Where's that?" Davy had said when she heard about the possible move. A long-time resident of Connecticut, Davy was somewhat skeptical about the change, but she packed up her family and drove south. Golf and water activities were important to the Davy family, so Landfall seemed the perfect place for them to raise their boys.

Then, tragedy struck.

Rip died suddenly and unexpectedly a mere two years after they had settled in Wilmington. The boys were only 13 and 10 at the time. The young family was devastated. Still new enough to be considered "Yankees," the family had no idea of the amount of love and support they would receive in their adopted city.

"Even though we hadn't lived here that long, we were embraced by the community here in Landfall and by our church. All my friends from Connecticut thought I'd bring the boys back home – after all, I had history there. But we loved it here. And here we stayed," says Davy.

For about a year after the death of her husband, Davy and her sons lived in the home they had originally purchased at Landfall. But that house seemed too big for just the three of them, so Davy decided it was time to downsize.

"We loved Landfall and our street in particular. The boys had been through so much, I wanted to keep things as steady as possible for them. Our house was located across from the clubhouse and near the water – perfect for our interests. Plus, we had friends here, too. When the house next door came on the market, it was perfect for us – it was smaller by about 1,500 square feet and seemed just right. We were still on the same street, still across from the clubhouse and still close to the water. The move was an easy one and the boys' lives were not disrupted too much," says Davy.

The house itself is white-painted brick with black shutters and trim. Large clumps of pampas grass provide privacy for the backyard, and the style of the house is classic. The great room is as spacious as the name suggests, with a marble fireplace complete with gas logs. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming, a place to relax and be at ease.

Though Davy is an interior designer, in her own home, there are no rules.

"This is what I feel comfortable with and, though I don't follow the rules necessarily, it all works," says Davy.

Interior design comes naturally to Davy. Her mother also studied the subject and she has fond memories from childhood of going to shops with her mom to find unusual items for their home.

"Mom's name is Mary but she's called Scarlett for her red hair. She is the

one who found this wonderful coffee table sculpted by Paul Evans. I grew up with this table. On Christmas mornings, my siblings and I would unwrap our gifts and throw the bows in the circle made by the sculpture. We loved to save and reuse those bows. Now, I think the table is worth quite a lot of money — this table reflects our contemporary thinking," says Davy.

Davy is delighted that she has been named the design director at Zelman Style Interiors, a large design company with offices in New York City and South Florida. They will be opening a Wilmington office, complete with showroom, this fall.

"We're opening an office here because we think the time is ripe for a new flair in Wilmington that features innovative and unlimited design options," says Davy.

Besides the bronze and glass Paul Evans coffee table placed front and center in the great room, other items are scattered throughout the house that pique the interest of the observer. An Asian horse, for instance, stands beneath a large portrait of Davy herself.

"The horse has been with us in four different houses — I found it in a design shop and fell in love with it. The portrait, by Charly Ostefgellse, is the result of our buying a raffle ticket for it in a school auction. The painter asked me if there was an object she could include in the picture that might have symbolic meaning for me. You might have noticed I'm wearing a necklace with a simple but unusually styled cross. I had given this cross to my sister, who was a Presbyterian minister, while she was sick. When she died, I took it back as a keepsake. It's in the portrait so that a hundred years from now, people will know

what was important to me — faith," says Davy.

Between the portrait and the fireplace is an odd-looking chair. If you sit in it wearing a short skirt or pair of shorts, the brindle cowhide is likely to scratch the backs of your legs. The chair itself is a sort of love token from Davy's husband.

"We were on a ski trip out west and we saw the chair in a shop. I fell in love with it, but it was much too expensive. Five days later, I fell and ended up with a broken leg and a concussion. Rip asked me if there was anything he could do for me. I asked him to buy me that chair — and he did," says Davy.

Though Davy has had more than her share of tragedy in her life, losing her husband and, years before, her sister, she has had a fair share of joy as well. One of her passions is singing with the band in the contemporary service at St. Andrews-Covenant Presbyterian Church in downtown Wilmington.

"I enjoy singing — it's been a part of my life since I was a kid," says Davy. Attesting to this love of music is a complete drum set in the upstairs area where her sons usually hang out when they are home. Her older son, Will, is studying at the University of Pennsylvania, and Brooks is at Episcopal High School in Virginia. But when they are home, the upstairs is all theirs.

"I really like the FROG (finished room over garage) because it is so huge. We have twin beds, a nice TV area. There's even room for ping pong. The boys practically live up here on vacations," says Davy.

But her favorite part of the house isn't inside at all — it's the backyard, which is quiet and private, surrounded by trees.

"This is really another room, even in the winter. We eat out here, cook out here and just relax," says Davy. A large pond adds to the ambience as well as a wooden bridge used by golfers as they play.

"The bridge really isn't ours, of course, but I like to pretend it is," says Davy. Recently, she hosted a large party of guests and some slept in sleeping bags out back.

"This area gives us so much room and it's just so peaceful," says Davy.

She confesses she loves nothing more than to walk along her street in the evenings, which loops around to provide about a ten-minute stroll.

"I stop sometimes and look up at the stars — a simple moment but that's what I like — simple and comfortable," says Davy.

Soon after settling in Wilmington, Davy discovered her beloved college music professor, Dr. Robert Jones, had retired from St. Lawrence University in New York to Oak Island, where he started a catering company. She had sung under his direction while in college as part of a select a cappella group and had grown close to him. As his health declined, he moved to Wilmington to an assisted living facility, and they reconnected.

"After I discovered Dr. Jones was here in Wilmington, I knew for certain this is where I wanted to be. It was yet another affirmation that I had made the right decision to stay here, rather than return to Connecticut," says Davy.

As Davy begins her new endeavor as design director for Zelman Style Interiors, she contemplates her creative ideas in her own home office, a room off the great room with windows all around.

"I can watch the golfers if I want. And the birds. Sometimes, a friend will see me sitting here working and tap on the window. And I know I'm home, really at home," says Davy.

ALMANAC

# November

By Noah Salt

"I have come to regard November as the older, harder man's October. I appreciate the early darkness and cooler temperatures. It puts my mind in a different place than October. It is a month for a quieter, slightly more subdued celebration of summer's death as winter tightens its grip."
*—Henry Rollins, actor, columnist, punk rock icon*

## Gobble it Up

It's finally here, gathering time for America's favorite eating month. According to *The New York Times*, the average number of calories a person consumes at Thanksgiving dinner is an astounding 4,500, proving beyond the shadow of any doubt that Turkey Day is our most gluttonous day of food consumption. Curiously, according to something called the Calorie Council, which sounds like a nefarious government agency, most of those calories come from the all-day snacking around the TV that defines Turkey Day in most American households. Still, Americans on average consume more than 675 million pounds of turkey on Thanksgiving. Approximately 40 million green bean casseroles are eaten along with 50 million pumpkin pies, and God knows how much oyster stuffing. According to Butterball, the turkey brand that sells more than 12 million of the 51 million birds sold annually, there's a very good reason the company offers a special "Turkey Help Line."

**The Dumbest Five Questions to the Butterball Help Line:**

1. "Is it OK to thaw my turkey in the bathtub while bathing my kids?"
2. "Can I brine my turkey in the washing machine?"
3. "Can I use my oven's self-cleaning cycle to speed up the cooking process?"
4. "If I cut my turkey with a chainsaw, will the oil affect the taste?"
5. "Can I take my frozen turkey into the sauna to thaw it out faster?"

## Nutmeg's Secret History

Who knew the Almanac Gardener's favorite holiday spice has a secret sordid past? Nutmeg — one of the three most popular spices used in holiday cooking — was in such feverish demand by Holland's wealthy diners in the 17th century, according to food historian Michael Krondl, that Dutch spice traders resorted to imprisoning and killing competing English merchants and massacring the nutmeg-farming people of the Banda Islands in Indonesia to keep their edge in the spice trade. Also little known: After years of battling the rival English, both sides sat down in 1667 to hammer out a deal in which the Dutch traded control of Manhattan Island to the English in exchange for the last nutmeg island the British controlled, as well as access to South American sugar plantations. Why was nutmeg so valued? Consumed in the right quantity, it was known to cure certain ailments and provide "milde and pleasant hallucinations," according to one ancient Dutch herbalist. We say pass the pumpkin latte and pile on the nutmeg, please. Stayed tuned next month for "Eggnog goes wild."

## November's To-Do List

With cool days here and most of the heavy gardening behind us for a bit, now's the time to get a jump on next spring's garden:

- Rake up leaves and create a leaf mold area or add to your compost pile.
- Prune flowering trees and shrubs as they drop their blossoms.
- Clean up garden, rake out and remove dead material.
- Divide and transplant perennial plants.
- Plant last of spring flowering bulbs and sow wildflower seeds.
- Before the ground freezes, generously water shrubs and potted plants.
- Sharpen tools, reorganize storage shed, drain and store hoses.
- Begin your master plan for 2015, in advance of spring catalogs.
- Restock bird feeders.

# 18th Annual Festival of Trees

A Benefit for Sandhills Children's Center

*Wednesday, November 19 through Sunday, November 23*
*The Carolina Hotel*
*80 Carolina Vista Drive ❖ Pinehurst, NC*

*Enjoy a showcase of over 200 decorated holiday trees, wreaths, gift baskets and gingerbread houses displayed throughout a winter wonderland. The festival includes a silent auction, live entertainment, Festival Marketplace, Candy Cane Lane with Santa & Mrs. Claus and more. All proceeds benefit Sandhills Children's Center.*

**Pre-register for the Silent Auction**
**www.Festival*of*Trees.org**

# Brightmore UNIVERSITY SERIES

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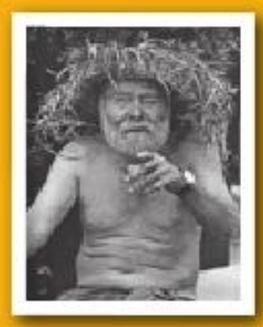
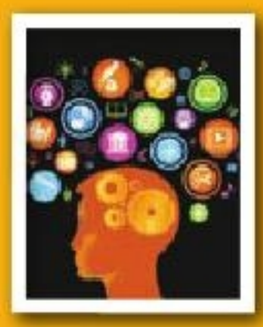


**"The Fort Fisher Hermit": The Mysterious Life and Death of Robert E. Harrill**
*Film by Rob Hill, Common Sense Films*
*Book by Fred Pickler and Daniel Ray Norris*
**Wednesday, November 5, 2014 at 2 p.m.**
**Brightmore Independent Living**

Join us as we screen this fascinating documentary and review the newest hermit book, *The Reluctant Hermit* written by Co-Authors Daniel Ray Norris and Fred Pickler, who was also the lead investigator into the mystery surrounding the Hermit's tragic death. Find out what drove a 62 year-old man from his lifelong home in the mountains to an old WWII Bunker on the coast to live out his life, and how he became one of the state's largest tourist attractions, second only to the Battleship. Copies of the book will be available for purchase and signing by the authors.



**"Memory Matters": Preserving Sharpness and Improving Outcomes with Early Diagnosis and Intervention**
*Presented by Martin Case, J.D., Host of "Memory Matters" on 106.7 WMYT*
**Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 2 p.m.**
**The Commons at Brightmore**

Join us on National Memory Screening Day as we present groundbreaking information on maintaining our quality of life and cognition with early detection and intervention. Learn the simple things we can do today that will help us preserve our memories and mental awareness well into our golden years.

**"Stampin Up": Holiday Card-Making Made Easy and Fun!**
*Presented by Nancy Lewis, "Stampin Up"*
**Monday, November 3, 2014 at 2 p.m.**
**Brightmore Independent Living**

Join us and instructor Nancy Lewis of "Stampin Up" and learn to make gorgeous holiday cards for all your loved ones.

**Reserve your seat for these FREE events by calling 910.350.1980.**

**Brightmore of Wilmington**
2324 South 41st Street, Wilmington | 910.350.1980
www.brightmoreofwilmington.com

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Sunday, November 23, 2014 at 4 p.m.
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2014

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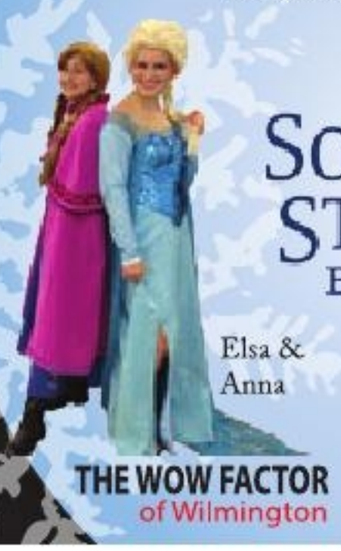

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Not a member? Join today or at our next meeting on November 13 at NHC Arboretum, 6:30pm - 9:00pm

Liz Hosier

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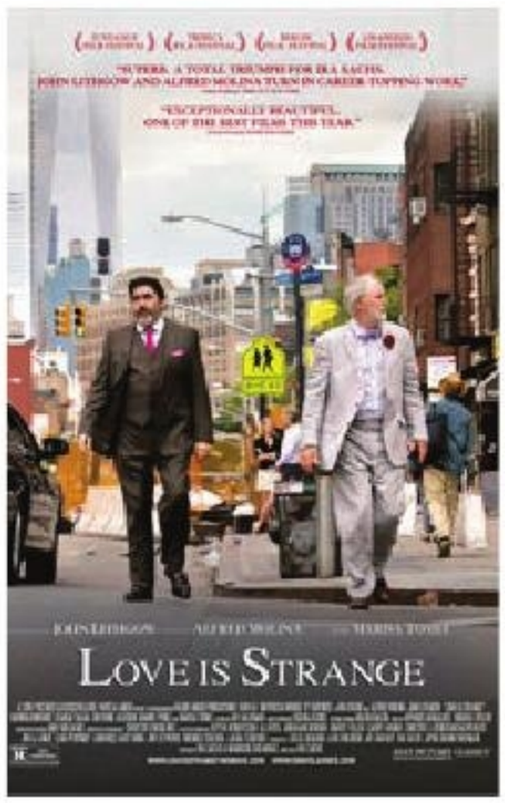
# November 2014

# Arts Calendar

Benefit Concert

11/2

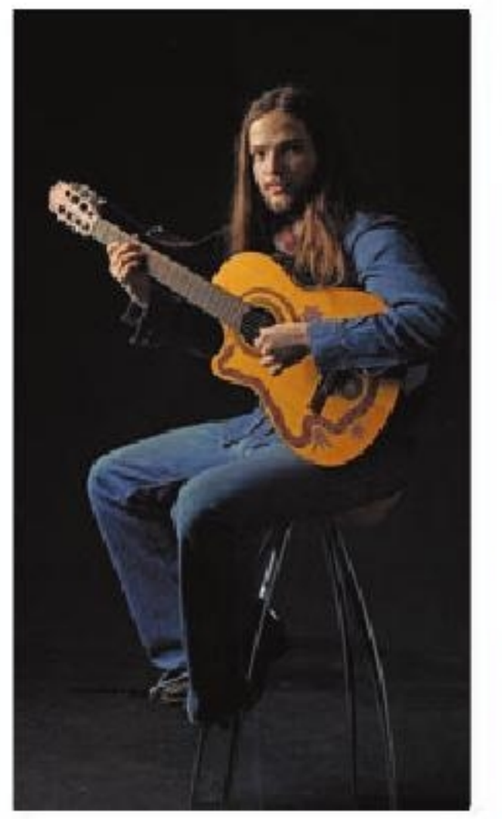



Film Screening & Discussion

11/3

Live Theater

11/13-23



Nano Stern Live

11/22

### 11/1 First Tee Golf Tournament

8:30 a.m. Captain's choice, four-person scramble with prizes in three divisions. Includes dinner plus live and silent auctions. Registration: $600/foursome. Porter's Neck Country Club, 8403 Vintage Club Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 888-0019 or www.thefirstteecapefearregion.org.

### 11/1 Sidewalk Art Competition

9–11 a.m. Sidewalk chalk art competition featuring students from Ashley, Hoggard, Laney and New Hanover high schools. Each school will have a designated corner at the intersection of Main and Innovation; a panel of judges will decide who goes home with the coveted trophy, which will remain on display at their school for one year. Mayfaire Town Center, Main Street, Wilmington. Info: www.mayfaire.com/blog.

### 11/1 & 2 Surf to Sound Challenge

9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Elite paddlers will brave the Atlantic, battle through Masonboro Inlet and navigate the channel behind Masonboro Island while intermediate paddlers will take a flat-water course around Harbor Island. A waterman's expo will take place at the race site and cash prizes will be awarded to the top three in all divisions. Admission: $60. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2251 or paddleguru.com/races/SurftoSound2014.

### 11/1 Fall Gourmet Sale

10 a.m. – 12 p.m. The Ministering Circle of Wilmington celebrates its 125th anniversary with its annual sale, which includes gourmet foods, relishes, pickles, baked goods and one-of-a-kind dishes. Proceeds support healthcare programs, educational facilities and local non-profits. Elk's Club, 5102 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 297-3359.

### 11/1 Polish Festival

11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Cultural festival featuring authentic Polish food, beer, polka dancing, crafts, live and silent auctions, and a variety of live entertainment for all ages. Special performances by the Kerolinka Dancers and the Chardon Polka Band. Free. St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, 4849 Castle Hayne Road, Castle Hayne. Info: (910) 675-2336 or www.ststanpolishfestival.org.

### 11/1 Brunswick Colonial Day

1–4 p.m. Living historians dressed in eighteenth century attire will demonstrate what life was like in the early days of this port town. Try your hand at the militia drill, visit the colonial dentist, take a turn in the stocks and pillory, dip your own beeswax candle and more. Free. Brunswick Town, Fort Anderson State Historic Site, 8884 St. Philip's Road SE, Winnabow. Info: (910) 371-6613 or www.nchistoricsites.org.

### 11/1 Pink Ribbon Cocktail Party

6:30 p.m. Annual celebration hosted by the NHRMC Foundation's Pink Ribbon Project to raise money to support local women with cancer. Admission: $150. Country Club of Landfall, 800 Sunrunner Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 815-5002 or www.nhrmcfoundation.org.

### 11/1 Balsam Range in Concert

7 p.m. Friends of Fort Fisher present acclaimed bluegrass band Balsam Range. Admission: $12–35. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road NW, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

### 11/1 A Ticket to Taste

7:30–9:30 p.m. Experience the tastes and flavors of Wilmington's refugee population: Burma, Iraq, Cuba and Colombia. See refugee faces and hear their stories through a series of interactive displays, photographs and film. Admission: $20. Proceeds benefit the Ministry, which helps refugees establish homes in Wilmington. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (919) 696-8230.

### 11/1 Arty Party

7–10 p.m. An artful evening celebrating and supporting the richness and depth of the local arts community. Performances, reception, silent auction and more. Admission: $75. Union Station Building, Cape Fear Community College, 502 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

### 11/1 & 2 Holiday Craft Show

9 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Saturday); 1–4 p.m. (Sunday). Get an early start on holiday shopping with a wide variety of items from local crafters and artisans. Free. American Legion Post 129, 1500 Bridge Barrier Road, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-9155.

### 11/1 & 2 Live Theatre

3 p.m. Cape Fear Shakespeare presents The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, a haunting and humorous portrayal of early American life in the Appalachian Mountains based on the original Washington Irving short story that recounts the infamous myth of the headless horseman and his inopportune victim, Ichabod Crane. Admission: $6–12. Hannah

Block Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 341-7860.

### 11/1–9 Cape Fear Fair & Expo

5–11 p.m. (Monday–Thursday), 5 p.m. – 2 a.m. (Friday); 12 p.m. – 12 a.m. (Saturday); 12–11 p.m. (Sunday). Live entertainment and family fun plus rides, games, shows, livestock exhibits, commercial booths, agricultural tents, judged competitions, delicious food and more. Admission: $20. Wilmington International Airport, 1740 Airport Boulevard. Info: (910) 313-1234 or www.capefearfair.com.

### 11/2 Energy Clearing Meditation

10–11 a.m. Energy Clearing Meditation for Emotional Honesty led by energy healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $10–15 (you choose). Exhale Yoga and Wellness Studio, 16 South Front Street, Wilmington (enter in alley). Info: www.allovehealing.com.

### 11/2 Raleigh Ringers in Concert

3 p.m. A concert by the acclaimed handbell choir specializing in unique interpretations of sacred, secular and popular music, including famous rock songs. Admission: $10–15. Carolina Civic Center, 315 North Chestnut Street, Lumberton. Info: (910) 738-4339 or www.carolinaciviccenter.com.

### 11/2 Benefit Concert

3 p.m. Performance by acclaimed classical trio Strata. Admission: $10–30. Proceeds benefit the Wilmington Concert Association. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.wilmingtonconcert.com.

### 11/2 Spoken Word & Dance

3–4 p.m. Techmoja Dance and Theatre Company performs the memorable music of the Civil Rights era in conjunction with School Pride: The Eastern NC Story, an exhibit by Willie Cole which celebrates the 50th anniversary of the passing of the Civil Rights Act. Admission: $5–10. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

### 11/2 Flounder Tournament

An all-day flat bottom fishing tournament where participants' catches will be taken to facilities that support farm-raising flounder within the state. Proceeds benefit flounder aquaculture research at UNCW and NC State. Dockside Marina, 1308 Airlie Road, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 617-7637 or www.fishfortomorrow.org.

### 11/3 Holiday Crafting

2 p.m. Join Brightmore Independent Living and instructor Nancy Lewis of "Stampin Up" and learn to make gorgeous holiday cards for your loved ones. Free. Brightmore Independent Living, 2324 South Forty-first Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-1980 or www.brightmoreofwilmington.com.

### 11/3 Author Lecture

7 p.m. Ernest Cline, a big name in the world of technology and video games, is the author of New York Times best-seller Ready Player One. Cline offers commentary on the relationship between people and technology. Admission: $10. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-7722 or uncw.edu/presents.

### 11/3 Film Screening & Discussion

7–10 p.m. Screening of Love is Strange followed by an intimate Q&A with filmmaker Ira Sachs. Part of Cinematique Film Series. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### 11/3–7 UNCW Writers' Week

A week of panel discussions, readings, workshops and related events that bring together local and national writers, students and lovers of literature. Free. UNCW Campus, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-7063 or uncw.edu/writers.

### 11/5 Film Screening & Discussion

2 p.m. Screening of The Fort Fisher Hermit (documentary) followed by book review, signing and Q&A with Co-Producer Rob Hill, Co-Author Daniel Ray Norris and Lead Investigator Fred Pickler. Free. Brightmore Independent Living, 2324 South Fourty-first Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-1980 or www.brightmoreofwilmington.com.

### 11/5 Energy Clearing Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. Energy Clearing Meditation for Closeness and Connection led by energy healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $10–15 (you choose). McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.allovehealing.com.

### 11/6 Closing Reception

6 p.m. The inaugural Emerging Artists Show features work by local children who have captured the "beauty of Bellamy" through various mediums. Admission: Free. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-7956 or www.bellamymansion.org.

### 11/6 Writing for Healing

6:15–8:45 p.m. Writing for Healing Energy Workshop for Abundance. Admission: $75. All Love Healing, 217 North Fifth Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.allovehealing.com.

### 11/6 Jazz at the CAM

6:30–8:30 p.m. Performance by Bob Russell and Michael D'Angelo, a local duo specializing in improvisational jazz. Admission: $5–12. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

### 11/6 Tribute Concert

7:30 p.m. Randy Linder and his band perform the hits made famous by Creedence Clearwater Revival. Admission: $10–29. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road NW, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

### 11/6 Basetrack Live

8 p.m. A multimedia performance which uses projection, spoken word and live contemporary music to tell the stories of the American military in Afghanistan. Admission: $8–20. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/arts.

### 11/7 Bollywood Film Series

12 p.m. An all-day screening of hit movies from India's best know film studio, Yash Raj Films. UNCW King Hall, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-7502 or www.uncw.edu/filmstudies.

### 11/7 Ecotone Launch Supper

6 p.m. Farm-to-table supper featuring the unveiling of Ecotone magazine's fall "Sustenance Issue." Family-style meal complimented with excerpts from acclaimed writers Alison Hawthorne Deming, Randall Kenan and more. Admission: $50. Proceeds benefit the nonprofit work of Feast Down East and Ecotone. UNCW Kenan Hall Courtyard, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: ecotonesupper.brownpapertickets.com.

### 11/7 Coasta Roasta Oyster Roast

6–8:30 p.m. Join the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce for their biggest social event of the year : all-you-can-eat oysters and shrimp, full bar, live music and networking. Admission: $75. Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, 1 Estell Lee Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-2611 or www.wilmingtonchamber.org.

### 11/7 Talent Show

7 p.m. "Wilmington's Got Talent" is a fundraising event that features amateur performers on the main stage. Admission: $20. Proceeds benefit She Rocks, an organization that supplies wigs, scarves and other items to the Ovarian Cancer Research Room at New Hanover Regional Medical Center. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### 11/7 & 8 Musical Theatre

7:30 p.m. Musical concert showcasing the original music and songs for the Blue Velvet Musical Concert written by Bryan Putnam. Hors d'ouevres and dessert by award-winning chef Denise Gordon. Admission: $28. Proceeds go toward the future development of Blue Velvet the Musical. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

### 11/7–9 Celebrity Golf Tournament

8 a.m. The annual Willie Stargell Celebrity Golf Tournament celebrates the life of the Hall of Fame baseball player and former Wilmington resident who passed from kidney disease. Includes celebrity reception, auction and dinner. Proceeds support kidney disease research and improve patient care. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 509-7238 or www.willieestargellfoundation.org.

### 11/7–9 Sonorous Music Festival

5 p.m. – 2 a.m. More than forty national, independent and emerging artists from all over the country and abroad. Admission: $25–75. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: sonorousmusicfestival.com.

### 11/7–9 Clay Guild Show & Sale

5–8 p.m. (Friday); 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Saturday & Sunday). Holiday show and sale hosted by the Coastal Carolina Clay Guild featuring an opening reception with the Tallis Chamber Orchestra and raffle. Proceeds benefit Empty Bowls and other community projects. Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-7860 or www.coastalcarolinaclayguild.org.

### 11/8 Walk to End ALZ

9 a.m. Rain or shine, 1.5-mile route around Mayfaire for all ages and abilities. Proceeds further the care, support and research efforts of the Alzheimer's Association. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Conservation Way, Wilmington. Info: (910) 803-8285 or act.alz.org.

### 11/8 Veterans Roll & Stroll

9 a.m. The Purple Heart Homes Run, Roll & Stroll for Veterans includes a 10k, 5k and 1-mile run through historic downtown. Front Street Brewery will provide beer for finishers and the US Coast Guard's Diligence will celebrate its 50th anniversary with static displays and tours. Admission: $25–40. Proceeds benefit Purple Heart Homes which helps reintegrate veterans into the community. Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 274-1898 or its-go-time.com/runrollstroll2014.

### 11/8 Holiday Artisan Market

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Pop-up Artisan Market hosted by Handmade Wilmington featuring a variety of handmade items including fine art, metal and beaded jewelry, artisan soaps, up-cycled art, unique fashion accessories, home décor, body care products and more. Carolina Beach Lake Park, South Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: handmadewilmington.com.

### 11/8 Battleship Program

1–5 p.m. Torpedo Headed for You: Damage Control on the Battleship North Carolina. Program lets visitors see how crews tackle survivability aboard the battleship and the skills and tools required to keep her afloat. Admission: $50–55. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

### 11/8 Literacy Council Oyster Roast

4:30 p.m. Oyster roast complete with all the fixins', music, libations and more. Admission: $80/person; $150/couple. Clarendon Plantation, 2260 River Road SE, Winnabow. Info: (910) 251-0911 or cfliteracy.org.

### 11/8 John Butler Trio Live

6 p.m. 98.3 The Penguin presents an evening with Australian roots and jam band, the John Butler Trio. Admission: $35–40. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 332-0983 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

### 11/8 Multimedia Documentary

7:30 p.m. Broadcast: A Man and His Dream – The Live Radio Show. An evening of old-time music, storytelling, live radio show and film which takes you on a delightful trip through the beginnings of the Blue Ridge tradition of music and the dream of one man who helped keep the tradition alive. Admission: $18–32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### 11/8 & 9 DILIGolf Tournament

10 a.m. – 3 p.m. On Saturday, the Navy League will host its annual DILI Golf Tournament, a four-man team scramble for local charities. Registration: $80/person; $300/team of four. Proceeds benefit the Coast Guard Scholarship Fund at Cape Fear Community College and Cape Fear Hospice. Magnolia Greens Golf Plantation, 1800 Linkwood Circle, Leland. Info: www.eventbrite/e/dili-golf-2014-tickets.

### 11/8 & 9 Cape Fear Kite Festival

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Paint the sky with fellow flyers from all over the Cape Fear. Spectators welcome. No competitions or rules; just fun. Shell Island Resort, 2700 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 520-1818.

### 11/8 & 9 Festival Latino

11 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Saturday); 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Cultural celebration featuring Latin American cuisine, music, dancing, a kid's fiesta, the great American hat race and arts and crafts vendors. Free. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0007 or www.amigosinternacional.org.

### 11/9 Energy Clearing Meditation

10–11 a.m. Energy Clearing Meditation for Increased Intuition led by energy healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $10–15 (you choose). Exhale Yoga and Wellness Studio, 16 South Front Street, Wilmington (enter in alley). Info: www.allovehealing.com.

### 11/9 Preservation Celebration

12–4 p.m. Tour the Blockade Runner Beach Resort for its 50th birthday plus four 1930s beach cottages. Hosted by Bellamy Mansion and the Wrightsville Beach Museum. Reservations required. Admission: $35 (includes cocktails and light buffet lunch). Various locations in Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 762-5682 or www.bellamymansion.org.

### 11/9 Luminary Tour

6:45 p.m., 7 p.m. & 7:15 p.m. Visit the sites of six distinguished Confederates on a tour featuring more than six hundred luminaries throughout the cemetery grounds. Admission: $10. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North Fifteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5682 or www.oakdalecemetery.org.

### 11/10 Prologue

7 p.m. Ben Steelman of Star News and North Carolina food writer Debbie Moose discuss Moose's forthcoming book, Southern Holidays: A Savor of the South Cookbook. Free. WHQR Gallery, 254 North Front Street, Suite 300, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or www.whqr.org.

### 11/11 Diligence's 50th Anniversary

10 a.m. A recognition ceremony to honor Coast Guard Cutter Diligence and recognize her fifty years of service to the country. Coast Guard Moorings, 109 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.uscg.mil/lantarea/cgcDiligence/50th_Anniversary.

### 11/11 Stand-Up Comedy

7 p.m. Wilma Connects presents a night of comedy with three of the funniest females in the Port City. Admission: $35 (includes appetizers and two drinks). Dead Crow Comedy Room, 265 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-8600 or deadcrowcomedy.com.

### 11/11 Jake Shimabukuro Live

7 p.m. Ukelele maestro Jake Shimabukuro performs everything: funk, jazz, flamenco, bluegrass, classical and rock music. Admission: $35–50. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500.

### 11/12 Energy Clearing Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. Energy Clearing Meditation for Peace led by energy healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $10–15 (you choose). McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.allllovehealing.com.

### 11/12 Dance-a-lorus

7 p.m. Part of the Cucalorus Film Festival, Dance-a-lorus merges dance and film. Admission: $12. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### 11/12–16 Cucalorus Film Festival

Annual film festival in downtown Wilmington showcasing more than two hundred feature-length films, shorts and documentaries. Screenings: $10; $15/premium. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-5995 or www.cucalorus.org.

### 11/13 Bird Hike

8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Two-mile hike along the North Carolina Birding Trail at Topsail Beach. Pre-registration required. Admission: $10 (Includes transportation from the park). Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

### 11/1 Junior Nature Program

1:30–3:30 p.m. Nature Art Drawing 101, an introduction to the methods and materials used to draw wildlife, scenery and individual critters. Designed for ages 6–11. Admission: $10. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

### 11/13 Cherry Poppin' Daddies Live

7 p.m. Cherry Poppin' Daddies (swing) perform a tribute to the music of the legendary Rat Pack with hits from the 1960s. Admission: $5–30. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/presents.

### 11/13–15 Holiday Market

6–9 p.m. (Thursday); 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Friday); 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday). Premier holiday shopping extravaganza with more than 100 vendors. High-end items include clothing, accessories, jewelry, home décor and art. "Sip & Shop Preview Party" on Thursday (11/13). Admission: $7/shopping pass; $25/preview party and shopping pass. Cape Fear Academy, 3900 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-0287 or www.cfaholidaymarket.org.

### 11/13–16 Live Theatre

8 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 2 p.m. (Sunday). Middletown. Play features a variety of regular folks in a seemingly normal American setting, but sudden revelations of existential angst, hidden fears, urges and anger exist behind the Main Street façade. Admission: $5–12. UNCW Cultural Arts Building, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/theatre.

### 11/13–23 Live Theatre

8 p.m. (Thursday-Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). What Doesn't Kill Me . . . Three one-act, dark comedies focusing on women's challenges and self-realization. Written by Wilmington resident Susan M. Steadman; directed by Nicole Farmer. Admission: $10–18. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 367-5237 or www.bigdawgproductions.org.

### 11/14 & 15 Songs From the Silver Screen

8 p.m. A musical collaboration between local young stars and adult actors celebrating songs from the silver screen with surprise celebrity cameo appearances. Dessert reception held at 7 p.m. Admission: $18.75. Proceeds benefit the Thalian Association Children's Theatre. Hannah Block Second Street Stage, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-7860 or www.thalian.org.

### 11/15 Historical Bicycle Tour

9 a.m. Guided bicycle tour winding through the canopied streets and along the waterfront. Pre-registration required. Admission: $20–25. NC Maritime Museum, 204 East Moore Street, Southport. Info: (910) 454-0607 or www.ncmaritimemuseums.com.

### 11/15 Patriot Rush

9 a.m. 5k and 1-mile run on a flat course featuring cash prizes, giveaways and fun signs along the route. Admission: $20–25. Proceeds benefit kid's athletics programs at Wilmington Christian Academy. Wilmington Christian Academy, 1401 North College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 612-0853 or jessweckel.wix.com/patriot-rush-5k.

### 11/15 Maco Light Legend 5k

9:30 a.m. Courses through the historic rail bed at the heart of the Maco Light/Joe Baldwin haunted legend. Admission: $10–25. Proceeds fund recreational programs at Charter Day School. Charter Day School, 7055 Bacon's Way, Leland. Info: (910) 655-3600 or www.charterdayschool.org.

### 11/15 Camellia Club Show & Sale

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Fall flower show and sale hosted by the Tidewater Camellia Club featuring prize-winning blooms grown by club members and local residents as well as educational and floral displays. Free. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 509-1792 or www.tidewatercamelliaclub.org.

### 11/15 Crawl for Paws

3 p.m. Carolina Beach pub crawl featuring 7-card stud crawl poker, 50/50 raffle and T-shirts. Proceeds support the CBPD K-9 Unit and local animal charities. Various venues in Carolina Beach. Info: www.facebook.com/crawlforpaws.

### 11/15 Health Care Heroes

5:30–11 p.m. Annual celebration held to bring together the Wilmington area medical community and its supporters, recognize individual excellence and award scholarships to up-and-coming members of the health care community. Wilmington Convention Center, 10 Convention Center Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonbiz.com.

### 11/15 Casino Night Benefit

6–9 p.m. Casino games, cocktails and hors d'oeuvres with prizes awarded at the end of the night. Admission: $50. Proceeds benefit Paws4People. City Club, 23 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: paws4people.org.

### 11/16 Energy Clearing Meditation

10–11 a.m. Energy Clearing Meditation to Meet Your Spirit Animal led by energy healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $10–15 (you choose). Exhale Yoga and Wellness Studio, 16 South Front Street, Wilmington (enter in alley). Info: www.allllovehealing.com.

### 11/16 NC Symphony Concert

7:30 p.m. The North Carolina Symphony performs Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 and 6; Britten: Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings; and Ravel: Le Tombeau de Couperin. Conducted by Grant Llewellyn. Admission: $24–55 (plus fees and taxes). UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.ncsymphony.org.

### 11/17 Songs at Sunset

7–9 p.m. A mixed bag of smooth jazz, standards, Broadway and nostalgic pop music with vocalist Nicole Thompson and pianist Judson Hurd. Admission: $1. Ted's Fun on the River, 2 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 231-3379 or tedsfun.com.

### 11/17 History Lecture

7:30 p.m. LeRae Ungleet of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources on "Women in World War I." Free. Federal Point History Center, 1121 A North Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-0502 or www.federalpointhistory.org.

### 11/18Real Estate Summit & Awards

7 a.m. – 2 p.m. Annual event that pulls together the region's residential and commercial real estate community to learn about the latest trends, hear from interesting speakers and honor individuals and organizations that make our community more vibrant. Includes keynote speaker, breakfast, discussions and award lunch. Admission: $80–90; $800–900/table of ten. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.businessmadecasual.com.

### 11/19 Memory Matters

2 p.m. Join Martin Case, J.D., host of "Memory Matters" on 106.7 WMYT on National Memory Screening Day as he presents groundbreaking information on maintaining our quality of life and cognition with early detection and intervention. Free. The Commons at Brightmore, 2320 South Forty-first Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 392-6899 or www.brightmoreofwilmington.com.

### 11/19 Energy Clearing Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. Energy Clearing Meditation for Sound Sleep led by energy healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $10–15 (you choose). McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.allllovehealing.com.

### 11/20 Beaujolais Nouveau

5 p.m. Celebrate the French tradition of the 14th Annual Beaujolais Nouveau with regional cuisine and Beaujolais wine tasting. Le Catalan French Café & Wine Bar, 224 South Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 815-0200 or www.lecatalan.com.

### 11/21 Party in the Pines

6–9 p.m. Celebrate the grand opening of The Festival of Trees with music, cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and desserts among the magnificently decorated holiday trees. Admission: $35–45. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.capefearfestivaloftrees.org.

### 11/21 & 22 Nature Adventure

8 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Friday & Saturday). Waterfowl and Black Bear adventure to Pocosin Lake/Lake Mattamuskeet Nature Wildlife Reserve, home to tundra swan, snow geese and black bears as well as two endangered species – the red wolf and red-cockaded woodpecker. Admission: $100. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

### 11/21–23 Holiday Dinner Theatre

7 p.m. A Trailer Park Christmas, a rowdy Christmas show from Durham writers Rachel Klem and Jeffrey Moore. Live music, audience interaction and a whole mess of hillbilly hilarity served up with a "city-fied" meal. Also runs 11/28 & 29. Admission: $24–42. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

### 11/21–30 Festival of Trees

Wander through a winter wonderland of trees sponsored and decorated by local businesses and organizations in support of Hospice. Admission: $6–13. Proceeds benefit Lower Cape Fear Hospice & Life Care Center. See website for schedule and related events. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.capefearfestivaloftrees.org.

### 11/22 Art for the Masses

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. A community tradition featuring the work of more than 150 local artists who retain 100% of the proceeds from sales. Door donations help fund public arts projects at the university. UNCW Campus, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-2522 or www.uncw.edu/artforthemasses.

### 11/22 Diamonds & Champagne Hope Ball

6 p.m. Charity gala featuring dinner and dancing, live entertainment by the Legendary Tams, silent auction, cash bar and the presentation of the inaugural "Champion of Hope Award." Admission: $80. Proceeds benefit Women of Hope. Coastline Convention Center, 501 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 297-7688 or womenofhope.org/diamonds-champagne.

### 11/22 Nano Stern Live

7:30 p.m. Celebrated Chilean artist Nano Stern draws from the traditional music of Latin America and European folk songs and performs music that addresses larger social issues. Admission: $18–32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### 11/22 Noel Paul Stookey Live

8 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony welcomes Noel Paul Stookey of the legendary Peter, Paul and Mary to the Wilmington stage. Admission: $6–40. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

### 11/22 & 23 Cape Fear Chorale Concert

7:30 p.m. (Saturday); 4 p.m. (Sunday). Traditional and contemporary songs and arrangements in a variety of styles. Free. Winter Park Baptist Church, 4700 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 233-0156 or www.cafefearchorale.org.

### 11/22 & 29 Kure Beach Holiday Market

9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Find handcrafted items such as soaps, jewelry, mosaics, paintings, photos, food, birdhouses, cards, wreaths, cornhole games, and more. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

### 11/23 Energy Clearing Meditation

10–11 a.m. Energy Clearing Meditation to Relieve Loneliness led by energy healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $10–15 (you choose). Exhale Yoga and Wellness Studio, 16 South Front Street, Wilmington (enter in alley). Info: www.allloveheal ing.com.

### 11/23 Emerging Choreographers Showcase

2 p.m. New choreographers learn the process of creating a dance. Professionally choreographing artists and teachers help guide them along the way. The Dance Cooperative, 118 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4995 or thedancecooperative.org.

### 11/23 Youth Orchestra Concert

4 p.m. Introduce kids to the joy and excitement of a live orchestra concert. Conducted by Steven Errante. Admission: $6. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

### 11/23 & 24 Christmas by the Sea

6:30–8:30 p.m. Family-friendly holiday activities on the boardwalk. Includes hot chocolate, visits with Santa, storytelling by the fire, live nativity scene, caroling, holiday-themed movies, puppet shows and arts and crafts for kids. Free. Boardwalk, Carolina Beach Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.facebook.com/Xmasbythesea.

### 11/26 Energy Clearing Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. Energy Clearing Meditation for Creativity led by energy healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $10–15 (you choose). McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.allloveheal ing.com.

### 11/27 Habitat Turkey Trot

7:30 a.m. Fundraising 5k and 1-mile run hosted by Cape Fear Habitat for Humanity featuring Thanksgiving-themed costumes, food and awards. Admission: $15. Proceeds benefit Habitat for Humanity. Wrightsville Beach Loop, Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 762-4744 or its-go-time.com/wrightsville-beach-turkey-trot-2014.

### 11/28 Wrightsville Tree Lighting

5 p.m. Tree lighting ceremony complete with hot chocolate, caroling and a visit from Santa, Mrs. Claus and the Elf Patrol. Free. Wrightsville Beach Park, 321 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.towb.org.

### 11/28 Downtown Tree Lighting

5:30 p.m. Downtown Christmas tree lighting features live music, caroling, warm refreshments, a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus, and a holiday marketplace. Free. Riverfront Park, Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-0907 or www.dbawilmington.org.

### 11/28 Gallery Walk

6–9 p.m. The Arts Council of Wilmington brings self-guided tours of galleries, art spaces and studios. Free. Various venues downtown, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

### 11/28 Gallery Reception

6–9 p.m. Part of downtown Wilmington's Fourth Friday Gallery Walk, Crescent Moon will offer food, drawings, live entertainment by Eric Miller of L-Shape Lot, and their customer-favorite wine pairing. Crescent Moon, 24 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.crescentmoonnc.com.

### 11/28 Flotilla Launch Party

7 p.m. Kick off Flotilla weekend with dinner, dancing, heavy hors d'oeuvres, cash bar, live entertainment by The Embers and Craig Woolard and a live auction. Admission: $30. Blockade Runner, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: www.ncholidayflotilla.org.

### 11/28 Lighting at the Lake

7 p.m. Lighting ceremony complete with Santa, musical entertainment and an Honor Guard display from local Cub Scouts to kick off the month-long Island of Lights Festival. One-mile walk around the lake offers views of the festive lighted displays. Free. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-5507 or www.islandoflights.org.

### 11/28–30 Enchanted Airlie

5–7 p.m. & 7–9 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday). Stroll through the gardens on a self-guided tour featuring festive lights, music and spectacular holiday displays. Tickets must be pre-purchased. Admission: $10–22. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or airliegardens.org.

### 11/28–30 Island of Lights Festival

7 p.m. Pleasure Island comes alive for the holiday season with endless family-friendly entertainment: lighted displays, concerts, a parade, flotilla, tour of homes and more. Various locations in Carolina Beach and Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-5507 or www.islandoflights.org.

### 11/29 Jingle Bell Breakfast

8:30–10:30 a.m. Breakfast with Santa; part of the Cape Fear Festival of Trees. Admission: $15–20. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or ww.capefearfestivaloftrees.org.

### 11/29 Turkey Trot Trail Run

9 a.m. 4-mile run and walk from Carolina Beach State Park Marina through pine forest trails and wooden footbridges. Includes hot breakfast buffet and awards. Admission: $30–35. Carolina Beach State Park, 1010 State Park Road, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 762-7212 or www.wilmington-roadrunners.org.

### 11/29 Festival in the Park

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. A highlight of the Flotilla weekend, this outdoor festival features a large selection of arts and crafts booths, an antique car show, delicious festival food, and children's area with inflatable slides and bounce houses, a coloring contest, Arab Choo Choo and more. Wrightsville Beach Park, 1 Bob Sawyer Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2120 or www.ncholidayflotilla.org.

### 11/29 Santa at the Cotton Exchange

11 a.m. Bring the children to welcome Santa as he arrives at the Front Street gates by special envoy and is escorted by elves to his station in The Cotton Exchange where he will take pictures with children every weekend through Christmas. Free. The Cotton Exchange, 321 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-9896 or www.shopcottonexchange.com.

### 11/29 Small Business Saturday

11 a.m. Support Small Business Saturday at Crescent Moon and receive a credit on your American Express statement. Crescent Moon, 24 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.crescentmoonnc.com.

### 11/29 NC Holiday Flotilla

6 p.m. Celebrate the holidays coastal-style with a lighted boat parade on the water followed by a traditional fireworks display. National and local celebrity judges and spectators will vote for their favorite. Free for spectators. Entrance fee: $25/boat. Banks Channel, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2120 or www.ncholidayflotilla.org.

### 11/28 Tree Lighting at Mayfaire

6:30 p.m. Visit with Santa as he counts down to the lighting of Mayfaire's 16-foot Christmas tree and enjoy family-friendly holiday entertainment. Thalian Association will perform a scene from the beloved classics A Christmas Carol and Yes Virginia; The Wilmington Ballet Company will present the magical story of The Nutcracker, and Elsa from Frozen will sign "Let it Go". Mayfaire Town Center, 900 Town Center Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-5131 or www.mayfairetown.com.

### 11/29 Performance & Book Signing

7 p.m. Tom Maxwell, original member of the Squirrel Nut Zippers band, will perform and sign copies of his book. Quarter Moon Books, 708 South Anderson Boulevard, Topsail Beach. Info: (910) 328-4969 or quartermoonbooks.com.

### 11/30 Energy Clearing Meditation

10–11 a.m. Energy Clearing Meditation for Sexual Awakening led by energy healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $10–15 (you choose). Exhale Yoga & Wellness Studio, 16 South Front Street, Wilmington (enter in alley). Info: www.allloveheal ing.com or Jennifer@allloveheal ing.com.

## WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

### Monday – Wednesday Cinematique Films

7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### Tuesday Wine Tasting

6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

### Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

### Wednesday Poplar Grove Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of Poplar Grove Plantation. Fresh produce, plants, baked goods and the best in handmade crafts. Open through 11/26. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.com.

### Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM

12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

### Thursday Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

### Saturday Riverfront Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artists, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Open through 11/22. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com.

*To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.*

WAVES THAT BREAK THE SHORE PRINT

BY JOHN W. GOLDEN

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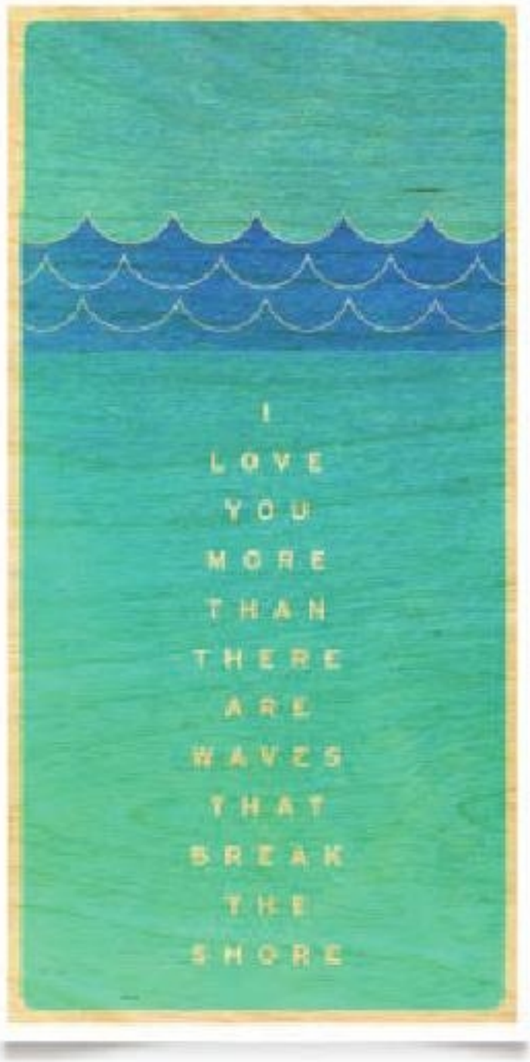


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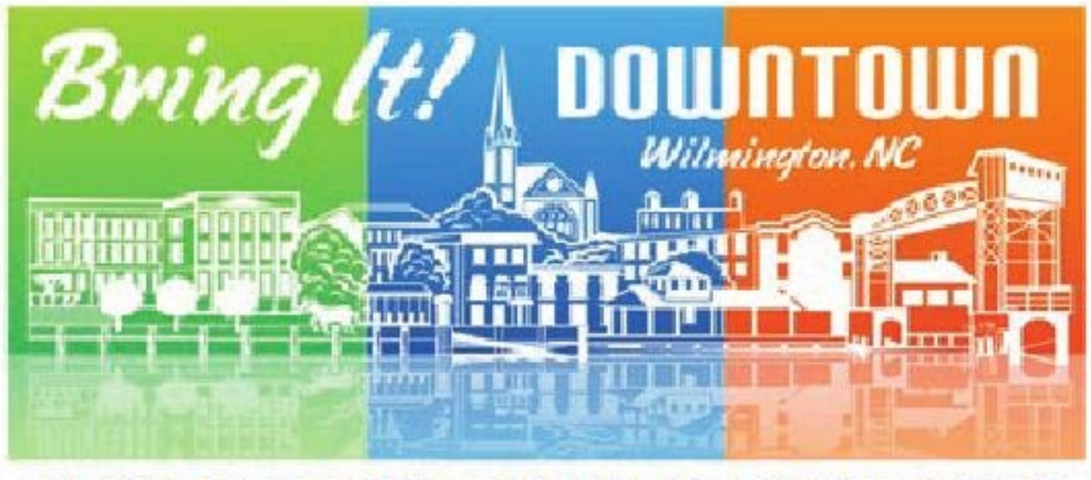


PARK FREE 1ST HOUR IN CITY DECKS

# Quarter Moon's NOVEMBER EVENTS

Thursday, November 6th, 6pm
Festive Fall Wine Tasting
- $5.00 for 5 fall wine tastings -

Thursday, November 13th
Our Holiday Hen Party
6pm Shop 'til you Drop!
- A night of pampering and prizes -

Saturday November 29th, 7pm
An evening with Tom Maxwell,
Original member of the legendary
Squirrel Nut Zippers
- Performance and Book Signing -

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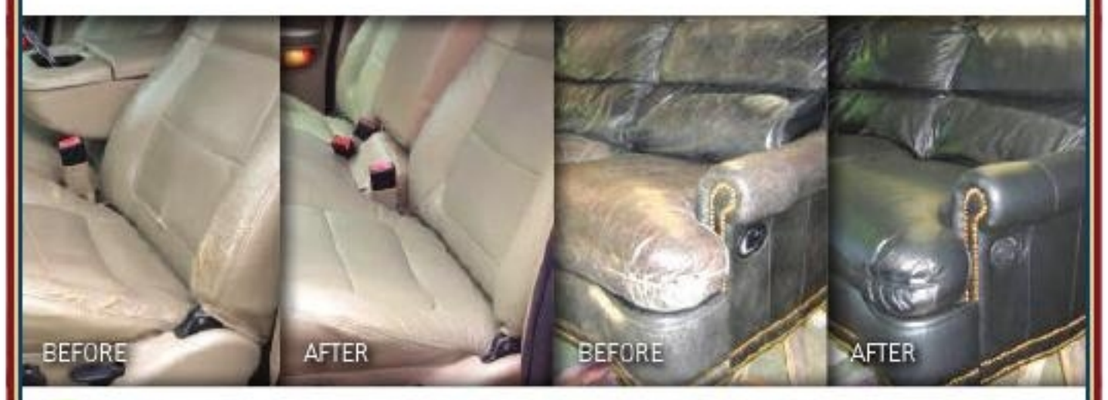


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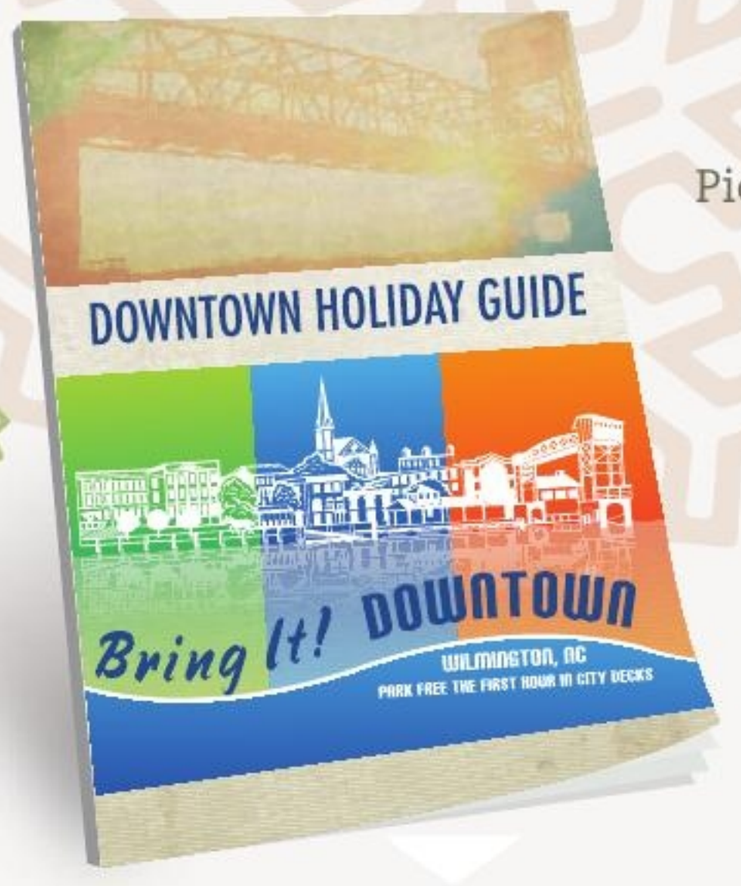


Pick up the DOWNTOWN HOLIDAY GUIDE at participating shops or visit www.bringitdowntown.com for an online version. Find gift ideas and coupons to make your holiday shopping easy.

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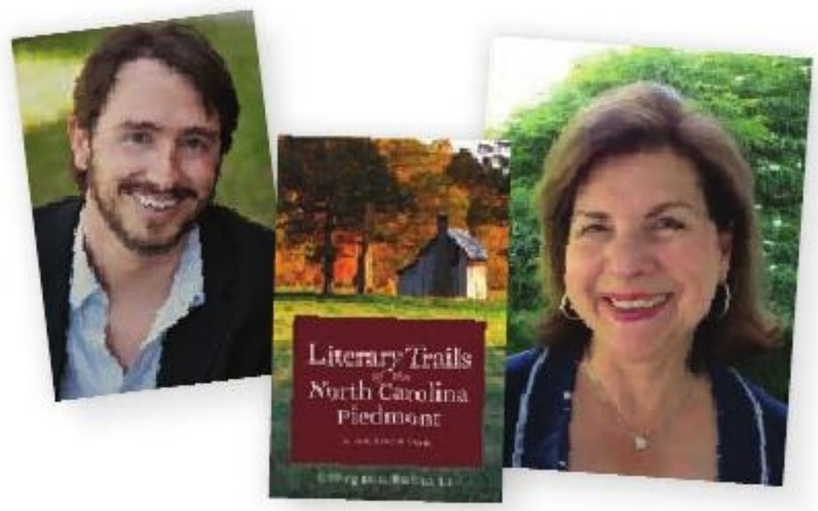
# N.C. WRITER'S Notebook

By Sandra Redding




## LITERARY EVENTS

**November 3–7** (Monday–Friday) Writers Week 2014, UNCW. This annual gathering of writers, students and the general public includes workshops, author panels and readings. Info: uncw.edu/writers/writersweek.html

**November 7** (Friday,7 p.m.) A Double Author Event! Pomegranate Books, Wilmington. New York's John Searles, popular TV critic, will tout his latest spooky tale, *Help for the Haunted*. Wiley Cash, born and bred in North Carolina, will celebrate the release of his second novel, *This Dark Road to Mercy*. Info: www.pombooks.net

**November 9** (Sunday, 2 p.m.) Miracle Dog. The Country Bookshop, Southern Pines, hosts Donna Smith Lawrence and her dog, co-signing their books, *Susie's Tale: Hand with Paw We Changed the Law* and *The Miracle of Susie: The Puppy that Changed the Law!* After Lawrence rescued the beaten and burned Susie, N. C. legislators enacted tougher penalties for animal cruelty. Info: www.thecountrybookshop.biz

**November 16** (Sunday, 2–4 p.m.) What All Writers Must Know About Marketing to Reach and Retain Readers, a free program presented by the Triad Chapter of Sisters in Crime. High Point Public Library, 901 North Main Street, High Point. Info: murderwewrite.org

**November 30** (Sunday, 2:30 p.m.). Ellen Fischer, popular Greensboro author of eighteen children's books, will read from her two 2014 books, *If an Armadillo Went to a Restaurant* and *Latke, the Lucky Dog* (a Hanukkah story), Barnes & Noble, Greensboro. Info: store-locator.barnesandnoble.com/store/2795

## CONTESTS & WINNERS

*Writing is a little like milking a cow: The milk is so rich and delicious and the cow's so glad you did it.*
— Anne Lamott

Main Street Rag's 2015 Poetry Book Award: includes publication for all finalists. Deadline January 31, 2015. Info: mainstreetrag.com

The Press 53 2015 Award for Short Fiction: includes publication of the winning short story collection plus $1,000 cash advance. Deadline: December 31, 2014. Info: press53.com

Randall Jarrell 2015 Poetry Competition: enter between January 15 and March 1, 2015. Alan Michael Parker of Davidson, first two-time winner of the contest, won in 2013 and 2014. Info: ncwriters.org

Writers' Workshop of Asheville. 24th Annual Memoirs Competition: postmark deadline November 30, 2014. Poetry Contest: deadline February 28, 2015. Info: twwoa.org

Congratulations to Laura Herbst of Pittsboro, winner of first prizes in the 2014 Doris Betts Fiction contest and the 2014 Rose Post Nonfiction Competition.

Recent book publications by North Carolina writers: *The Universe Wept* by Wayne Adams of Biscoe, *The Tiger Whisperer* by Belea Keeney of Apex, *Play Music* by Laura Lake White, originally from Greensboro, and *Extinction* by H. V. Purvis of Scotland County.

## WRITING LESSON

November is National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo.org). This annual Internet-based project challenges participants to write 50,000 words of a novel during one month. That's just over 1,500 words a day if you start now.

If you're searching for inspiration, consider the following: *Literary Trails of the North Carolina Piedmont*, *Literary Trails of the North Carolina Mountains* and *Literary Trails of Eastern North Carolina*. Indispensable tools for literary hopefuls, these books beautifully convey the history of writing in our state and provide priceless bios and writing samples of stellar writers. Within these covers, you will also find vivid descriptions plus directions to bookstores and libraries from the mountains to the shore.

Georgann Eubanks, author of the series, advises, "North Carolina is full of stories. You don't have to look hard, just pay attention. In writing *Literary Trails*, I met so many fascinating people. I hope the series will inspire the next generation of N.C. wordsmiths."

---

And do keep me updated on literary events at sanredd@earthlink.net

*Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's novel,* Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *is a riveting story about heartbreak and hope in a Quaker Community.*

# Port City People

## The 4th Annual Great Gatsby Gala

Hosted by Jess James at the City Club of Wilmington
Thursday, September 18, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Cheryl Ward and
Norwood Blanchard

Christine Harris, Neil Jackson (cast member of *Sleepy Hollow*)
Lindie Greenwood ( cast member of *Sleepy Hollow*), Brownie Harris

Jess James and Clark Dean

Tripp and Jennifer Murphy
David and Michelle Zumbro

Joe and Melanie Welsh
Nicole Massimino and Russell Ebelherr

Marcus and Jessie Conklin

Kathy Gresham, Tim Hines,
Dr. Lucy Nieves, Dr. Laura Harris
Jimmy Hopkins, Tania Hines

Katelyn Farrugia and Jessica Baltos


Ashley Harris and
Lauren Farraher


Madiana Udezo

Ted and Laurie Sullivan
Bill Gergeli and Dana Lemesh

Phillipe and Victoria Poulin
Tracy Heronymus and Graham Van Dusen

Troy Widmer and
Rozy Bathon

# Port City People

"Stand Up 2 Finish the Fight"
Viewing Party Broadcast
The Trask Coliseum UNCW Campus
Friday, September 5, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Josh Cooper and Gina Gilb

Jeanne Miller and Heather Lufholm

Dove Avylla and Cheryl Reigle

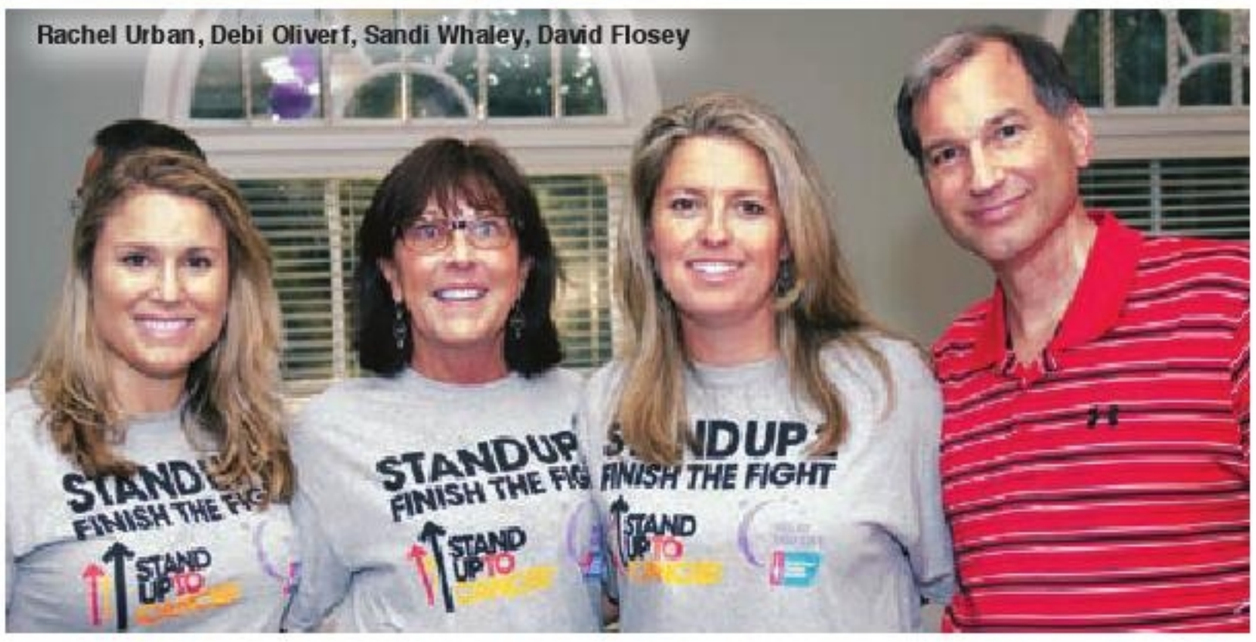
Laura Clark and Teri Ferguson

UNCW Mascot Sammy and Emma Hansen

Chad & Laura Clark

Andrew Faircloth, Tiffany Fountain

Simeon, Taliah, Seline, and Tiara Kitt


Rachel Urban, Debi Oliverf, Sandi Whaley, David Flosey

# Port City People

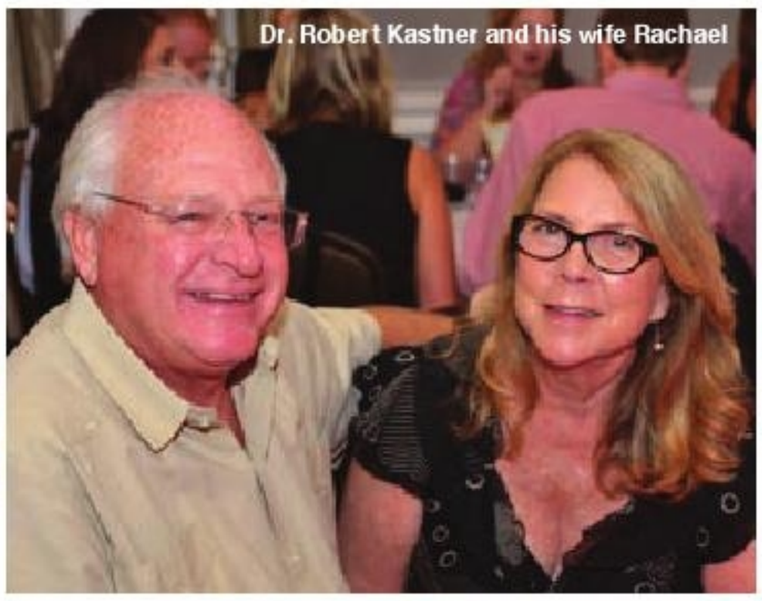
## One Less Hungry Child Gala - Nourish, NC

Friday, September 12, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Ashley & Newland Crocker, Sean & Lynn Obrien

Danielle Cappellino, Casey Purcell, Emily Purcell, Emily Angevirie


Dr. Robert Kastner and his wife Rachael

Adam & Sarah Sheay

Jeff Hildinger and Lori Eaton

Daneille & Annaleise Cooke

Beth Hollis (Executive Director of Nourish NC)

# Port City People

## 1st Annual Fundraiser Luncheon – She ROCKS

(Research, Ovarian, Cancer, Knowledge, Support)

September 19, 2014 – Country Club of Landfall

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Dr. Walter Gajewski

Dr. Ellis Tinsley

Jack Barto, CEO NHRMC

Mary Barto

Dr. Vickie Bae-Jump

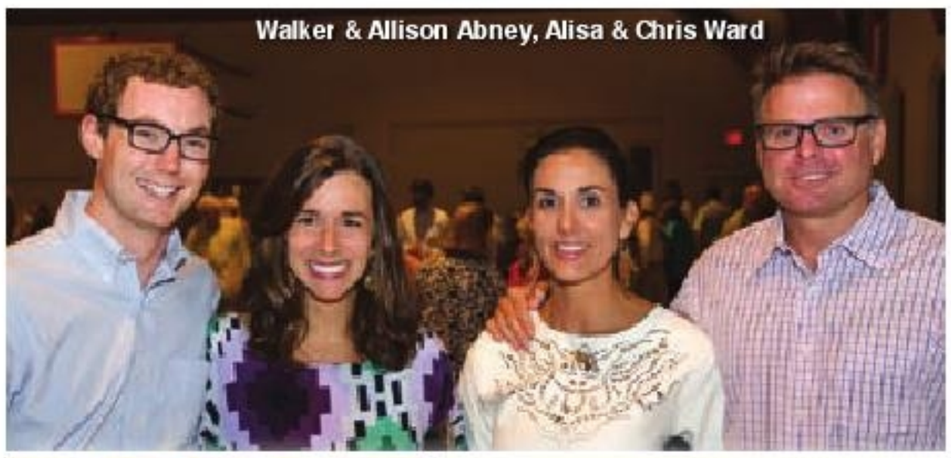
Jeannie Lister, Pat Hatcher, Linda Brown, Hollan Anderson

Beth Quinn (Board of Directors)

# Port City People

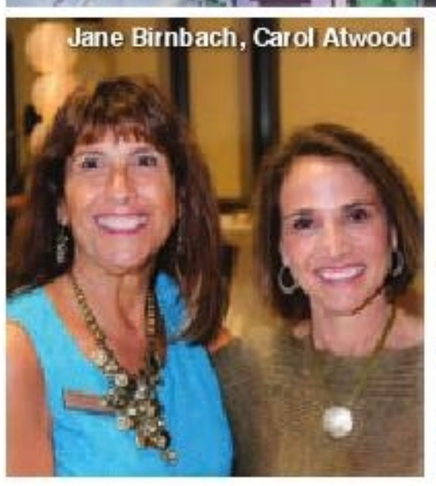
## The Flavor of NC
## Benefit for the Good Shepherd Center
## St. James Parish
## Saturday, September 20, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

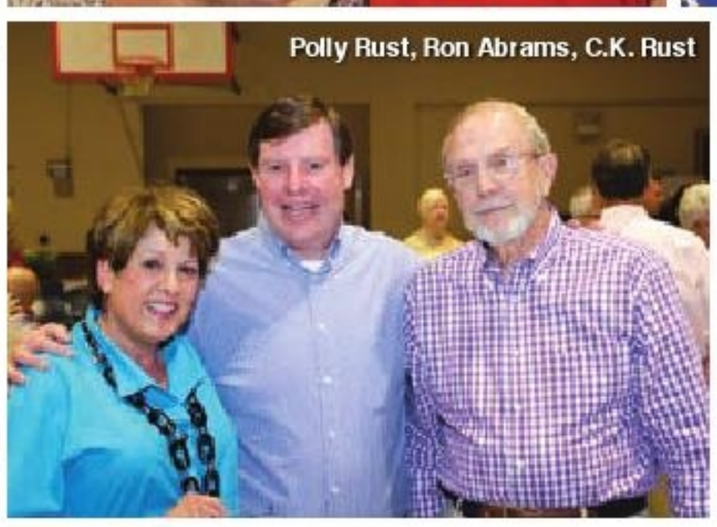

Walker & Allison Abney, Alisa & Chris Ward

Maryann Skrapits, Nancy Smith

Nikki & Andy Smith

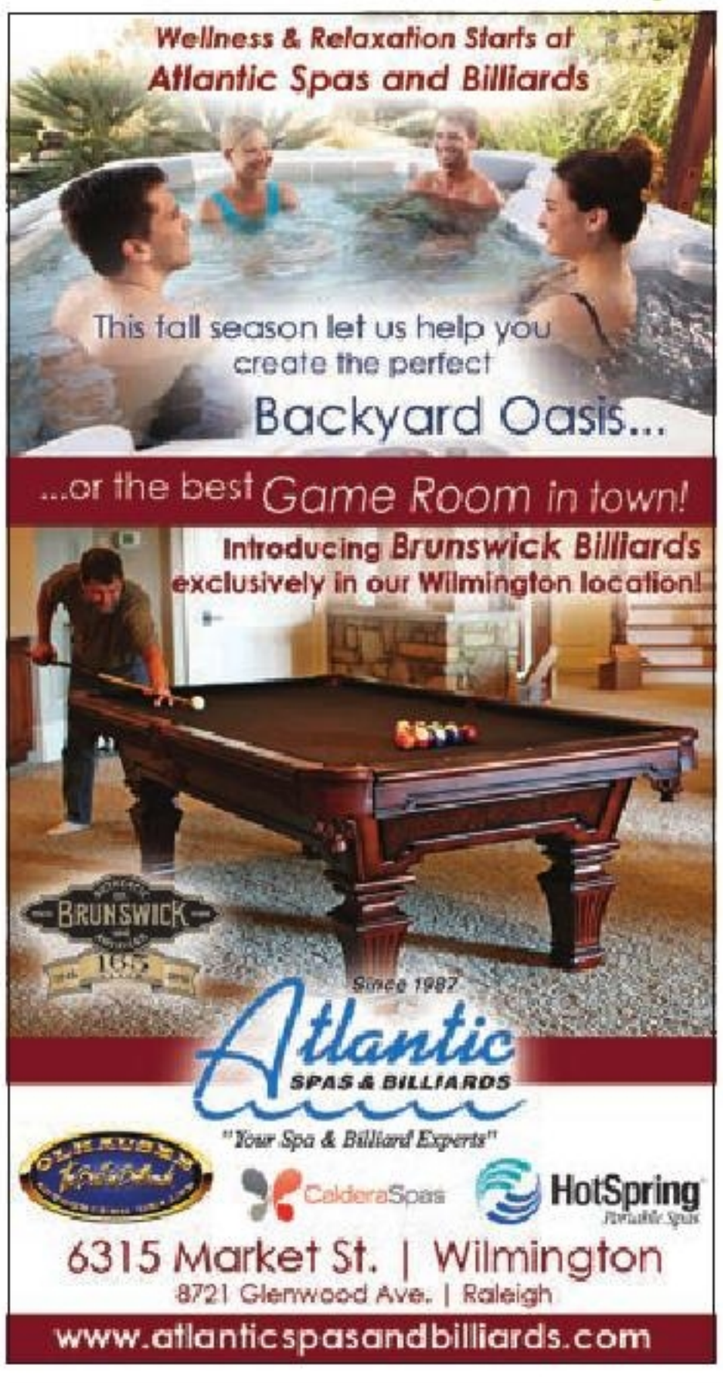

Jane Birnbach, Carol Atwood

Rick & Janet Knott


Polly Rust, Ron Abrams, C.K. Rust

Matthew & Libby Fox, Heather Braithwaite

## Life & Home

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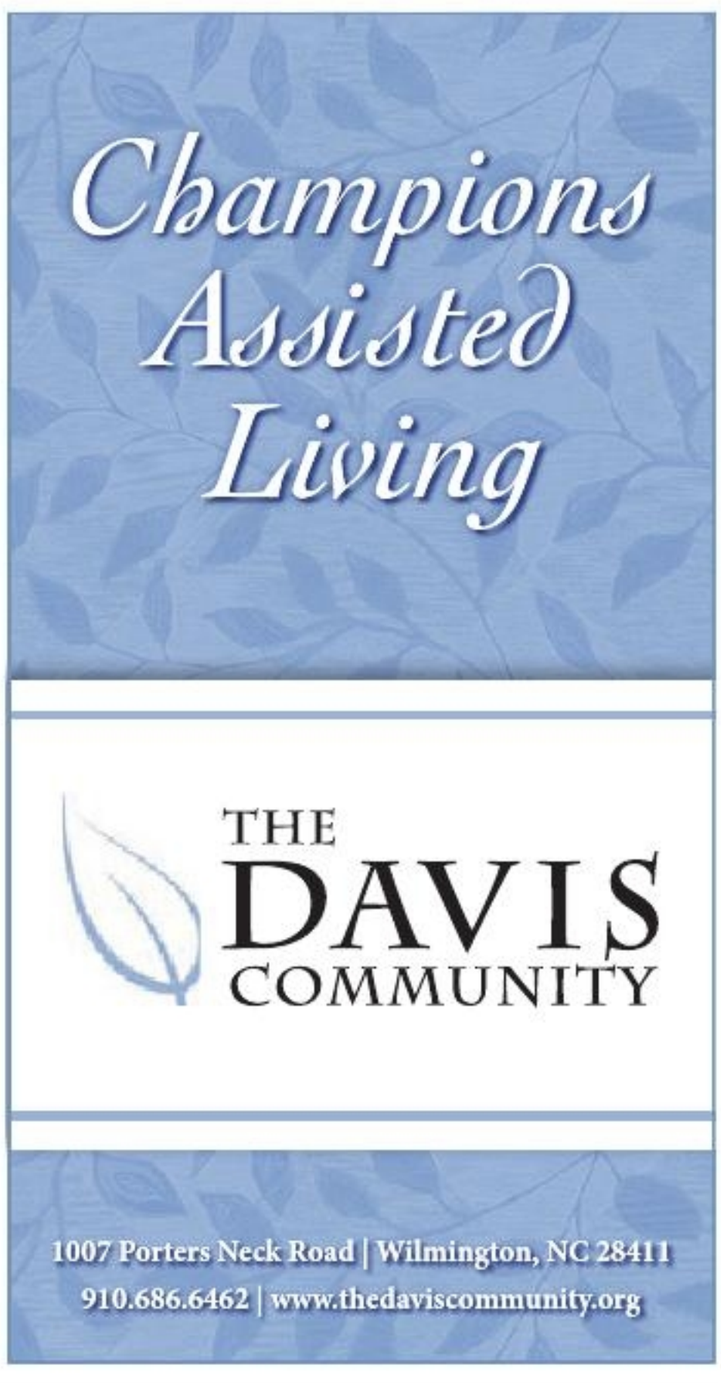

# Trust Astrid, Time to Turn the Page

## *November's Forecast*

By Astrid Stellanova

*Of all the star children, Scorpios may be the most private (make that downright secretive) public figures of all time. Scorpios include Johnny Carson, Kevin Kline and Bill Gates – see what I mean? Friendly on the face of things, but keep to the down low. Even all the November observations this month are in conflict. I mean, it's National Pepper Month, but also National Sleep Comfort Month. Star Children, that's November for you.*

**Scorpio (October 23–November 21)**
At last, Honey! There's definite harmony in your sign this month, when Venus and Mercury move through your sign. Your high ambitions and love life will hum along in synch, and you should have no complaints this birthday. With a full moon on the 6th, and a new moon on the 22nd, take advantage of this juncture and sell that old Dodge on Craigslist. Somebody will want whatever you are selling, as you possess big magic this month. If your life story was a perfume, it would be Opium – expensive and best in small doses. You're a temptation, Sugar, and more than a little dangerous and addictive.

**Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)**
Venus is in your sign, and you are about to have a lot to twist and shout about. Just saying, Child, this is a good way to close out the year, with the stars shining on you with high favor. Given all that, this is no time to abandon your looks, Darlin', when opportunity comes knocking. Get a new haircut and change things up. Strut your stuff, and enjoy this month, 'cause there will be money jangling in your pockets, opportunity calling, and your phone ringing.

**Capricorn (December 22–January 19)**
Something that went wrong a long time ago is about to get right. There's an old grudge that someone has held against you, and even though you didn't want to own it, the fickle finger of fate points directly at you. It may seem like small stuff, but you ate the last Charlie chip in the can, and they still ain't forgot it. Well, there's a transit in your 12th house this month from November 16 through December 10, and finally, Honey, you get everything straight that ever went wrong. You're going to have a lot to be thankful for this Thanksgiving.

**Aquarius (January 20–February 18)**
Who licked the red off your candy, Child? You have not been your usual self, down in the dumps and ready to pour sugar in your ex-boyfriend's gas tank. Listen here: You do not want to wind up on the next episode of *Unsolved Mysteries*. When Mercury enters your sign in December, you get a lot of assist from the universe, so cheer up and straighten up. But until then, hold on until November 27, when Venus changes signs. You're gonna be alright; trust Astrid.

**Pisces (February 19–March 20)**
The full moon arrives and it is going to pack a wallop. This is like getting a life upgrade package to First Class, and don't second-guess it, just say "thank you!" Champagne wishes and caviar dreams, Honey! It's going to be powerful and cause you to rethink your life path, and all for the better, if you keep an attitude of gratitude. If Astrid didn't know better, and I don't, I'd say you are about to launch one of the best times of your life – so chew on that a little!

**Aries (March 21–April 19)**
Don't make a leaky faucet a national disaster. Drama ain't working for you this month. You're just tired, my little old Ram, and no wonder. It ain't like you have to reinvent the world every 30 days, but that's what you try to do. This month, that old restlessness drops away and gives you some much-needed peace and quiet. You don't much like peace, but you need it. Listen, fire sign: About the only change you need to make this month is your underwear. Chill, and that's an order from Astrid.

**Taurus (April 20–May 20)**
You're a strange hybrid, like the love child of Gypsy Rose Lee and Bullwinkle. One half of you is all smooth sex appeal and talent, and the other half blunders and ricochets from one misstep to the next. That's also your complicated charm. So, when Mercury heads into Scorpio, you get a break from walking into mud holes, and get serious action concerning love, house, and money. You're in control – and your Bullwinkle side backs off. Let Gypsy take over and dance!

**Gemini (May 21–June 20)**
Your sign is in transit from November 8–27. It will bring the easy passage you got back in September; a nice start-up to the holiday season. Let your mind wander back to long ago, and you will remember something you buried that needs to finally get dealt with. If you do, your inner peace might just get restored. Don't spend too much time on QVC; but DO seize opportunities that don't involve credit cards. Or timeshares! Or burping Tupperware!

**Cancer (June 21–July 22)**
In the lottery of life, this month is a whamdoodle. It hasn't been the easiest year for you, Darlin', but you get a karmic break this month. It's a good time for partnerships – business and romantic – and people are drawn to you and your ideas. Use this month's strong woo-woo power for good – you've got social capital and you might as well spend it. That handsome stranger at the door ain't an I.R.S. agent, either – he's got love potential.

**Leo (July 23–August 22)**
You are like the hairdresser who doesn't check the foils when she's doing a bleach job – you rely way too much on instinct and don't like abiding by the rules of nature. Honey, that just wreaks havoc. A full moon on the 6th will bring a powerful illumination for your work projects. Take this time to gauge yourself and your energies. Cutting corners ain't helping you get more done.

**Virgo (August 23–September 22)**
Last month was a lulu, and you are glad to turn the page in your calendar. Between the 6th and the 22nd, the moon not only sheds new light on what has been a dark path, but Sweet Thing, you finally notice it! You are about to enjoy some good opportunities, especially if you are in publishing or an educator. When you hit the 22nd, you will have some nice travel options, so keep your Samsonite packed and your pantyhose washed.

**Libra (September 23–October 22)**
If you liked September, you get a re-do. This is going to be a fun and favorable time, with Venus moving through Sagittarius. It will be something like an astral party bus streaking right through your sign. You're usually waaaaay too serious, and it's time for you to bust out some Libra fun. You've had more home projects than you probably wanted – your Lowe's card is almost tapped out – but the home front is looking good. Now invite the neighbors over and get a keg. Show off all them hard efforts!

*For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.*

# Martial Arts 101

*Yes indeed, I'm the parent with the jump rope in his shorts*

By Clyde Edgerton

**So my youngest son,** 9, had his second martial arts lesson today. I had my first. It was "Family Session" from 5:15 till 6 p.m.

Way back when I started taking piano lessons at age 7, my mother started also. She was 47. I'm considerably older. But I figured my taking martial arts along with my son was, in a sense, a family tradition. Start something new that a child is also starting.

But piano ain't martial arts. As I stepped onto the mat, I thought we'd be making some moves and stances, holler *hi-ya!* once in a while, etc. I wasn't prepared for the serious workout. I mean serious.

When I came to observe my son's first lesson two days ago I didn't watch what was happening on the mat so much because I was busy talking to one of the instructors, Mr. Solomon (names have been changed). Mr. Solomon said he weighed 425 pounds one year ago. He's now at 220 and shooting for 200. He couldn't say enough about the program. He was an excellent salesman. He may have noticed that I could stand to lose some weight. I was impressed; I liked Mr. Solomon; I liked Master Tu (the master instructor, not his name); I remembered my mother's example; I signed up.

After walking onto the mat today, Master Tu stood at attention as did the rest of us; he bowed; the rest of us bowed. He was very nice. He nodded toward my son and asked, "You the grandfather?" I shook my head no and before I could respond, he said, "His brother?" At that time I knew he had a sense of humor. This knowledge of Master Tu's sense of humor comes into play later in the story.

At about twenty minutes in, I was seriously out of breath and eyeing the clock. Twenty-five minutes to go. Master Tu has three assistants, including Mr. Solomon. They walk around and encourage you. We'd just finished push-ups and sit-ups and some strange jumping and I was breathing hard, bent over, hands to knees, looking at my feet. Sweat drops fell. I heard Master Tu say to his assistants, "Pass out the jump ropes."

JUMP ROPES?! My Lord. I needed a break. I was too proud to walk off the mat for a drink of water at twenty minutes in (maybe at thirty, but not twenty).

Mr. Solomon handed me a jump rope — each end with a wooden handle. I took it. "Go, get 'em," said Mr. Solomon.

What could I do? A plan blossomed in my head: I'd pretend to lose the jump rope and give myself a little break. I'd roll that sucker up and stick it in my shorts. I was wearing long, loose basketball shorts with Jockey underwear beneath. After all, *Master Tu had a sense of humor.* Right? That's it! I'd stick the rope in my pants and stand there (catching my breath) and when Master Tu looked at me, I'd raise my palms in a "well, where in hell did my jump rope go?" look or a "sorry, I didn't get a rope" look or something like that. And here's where Master Tu, *because he had a sense of humor, remember?* would laugh and then I'd laugh and by that time I'd have wasted three minutes of jump rope time and I could produce the jump rope and all is good and I've impressed my martial arts instructor with a very brief comedy routine while taking a damn break.

I rolled up the rope and started to stick it in my pants. But the pants were so loose it'd just fall through after I got past the elastic. *Maybe I should stick it in my underwear,* I thought. But that would make too big a bulge. I decided to stick enough of it in my Jockey shorts to keep it from falling through. As I placed the rope, I looked to the spectator section. That's where all the smart parents sit, watching their boys and girls exercise and do martial arts moves. I could tell that a woman, looking up from her knitting, was thinking, "That man is playing with himself while everybody else is jumping rope."

Everyone else was jumping rope. I got mine hid and stood there looking at Master Tu. I knew he was about to look at me and I was about to give him the raised palm look and say, "I don't have a rope."

He looked at me. I smiled and raised my palms, shrugged my shoulders, and said, "I don't have a rope."

He kept looking at me. He didn't laugh. Whoops. Was there a language issue here? Should I have learned "I don't have a rope" in Korean before class? Where was Master Tu's sense of humor now? He was sort of staring at my knee and frowning a little bit. I looked down. The handle was hanging out of my shorts.

I looked back at Master Tu. The question on his non-smiling face seemed to be, "Are you from another planet?"

I managed to wrestle the rope free of my underwear and start jumping rope. There was a big mirror up front. I looked at myself jumping rope. I thought of Mr. Solomon. I looked at the clock on the wall.

After class, my son and I got our uniforms. Assuming I return, next time I'll get my belt. A white one.

My knee hurts.

*Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir and a new work,* Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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